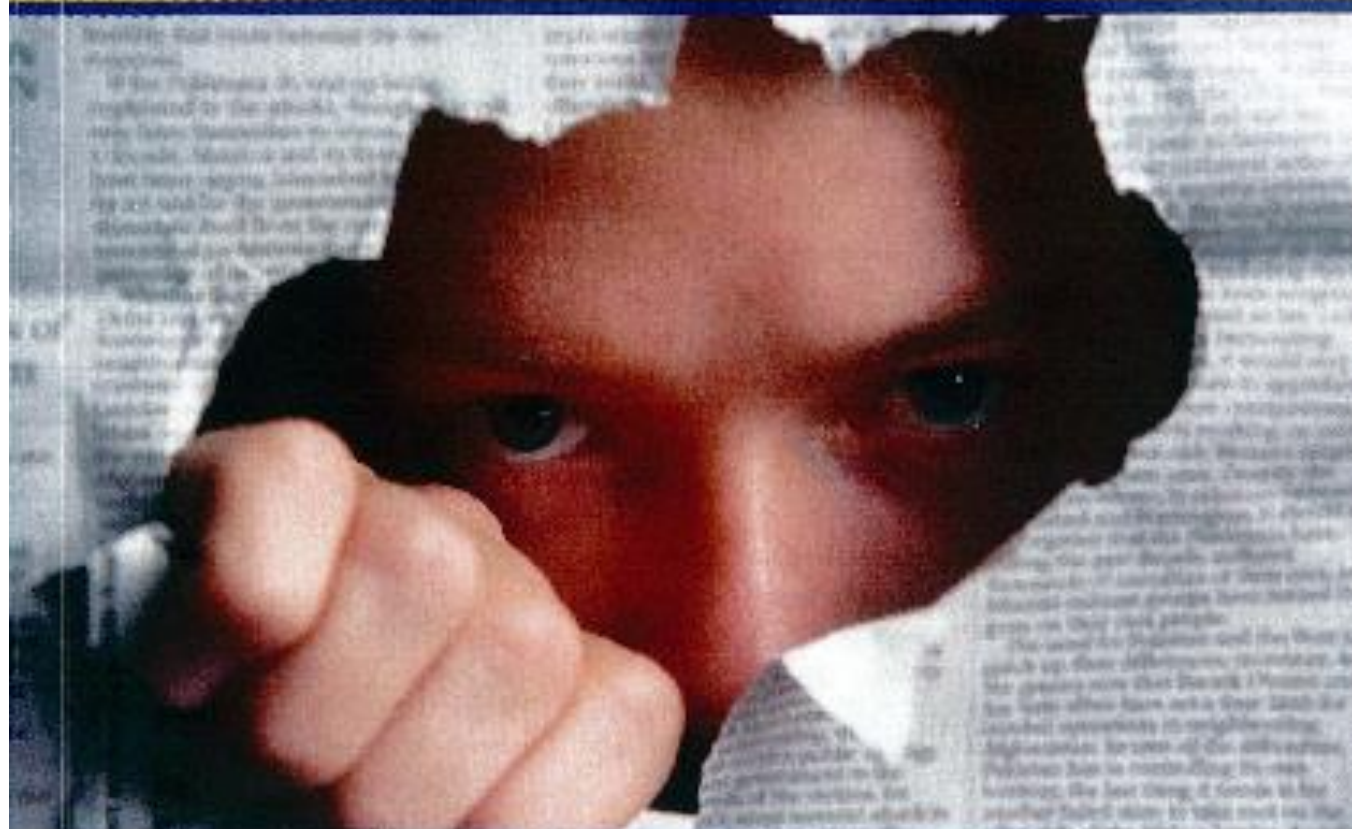


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CHAPTER I

FUNCTIONS AND FEATURES

OF ROMANIAN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

The press is certainly **a phenomenon that self creates**. It occurred, it affected the society and it re-affected it and so on, like a rolling snowball.

Nowadays it is difficult to figure out who influences whom more: does media influence the society or vice versa? Many believe that, as part of the society, the press can exert a changing effect on society only while changing the principles that society itself follows. But slowly, the press has become a pole around which the other sectors of society revolve. In the history of humanity, there is no example of creation of society that gets to control in such a measure the changes that society undergoes. We live in a cultural world of meanings created by the media and not in reality itself. What we perceive are significant representations and not reality itself, and this has a major impact on us. We increasingly get in contact with publicized cultural representations of a complex physical and social world and thus we pass by objective aspects of our environment.

People act not only based on what is happening or has happened in reality, but also based on what they think is a real situation, obtained from descriptions provided by the media; this offers meanings and interpretations, which often have only a limited correspondence with reality.

This correspondence is according to certain components highlighted by the literature of communication among which:

1. **Human memory** enables the development of knowledge;
2. Knowledge exists in the shape of **concepts** that give content to a cultural act;
3. **Meanings** for concepts can be created by a person through direct **sensorial contact** with different aspects of reality, or through **symbolic interaction** within a community of language and culture;

4. **Language** is primarily a set of **symbols** (verbal/gestured) that stand for certain pre-agreed meanings and can express cultural acts;
5. **Conventions** standardize the connections between symbol and meaning;
6. Symbols and linguistic conventions shape perception, interpretation, and behaviour towards physical and social world of society members.

I.1. FUNCTIONS; MEDIA PARADOXES

The history of media is the history of emotions, of social reactions, of the “mobilizations” that press messages have started. Nobody can deny the fact that the media responds to clear or diffuse needs and aspirations of individuals and communities. On a declarative level, the press sustains that it fully supports the desire of the “public good” being shaped by its demands or expectations. But the media's **main objective**, unreported is to **exert major influences on social life** by changing the actions of individuals or groups and by trying to create a kind of **negative dependence**¹ to products promoted by it. The communication contract between the press and readers is not formulated in terms of “equality of the parties”, the possibilities of response of the latter being quite low. Although theoretically the audience appears as the “supreme authority”, the possibilities of decision on the materials promoted by the media are practically nonexistent. The fact that the media already has a well established place in society is something obvious.

By analyzing its specific **functions** and the **role** that media has or assumes in society, I will try to show the action of the press in **shaping society**. This is by imposing new principles and rules, by building a value scale different from the traditional one, resulting in the creation of **new images and social representations** and thus changing (or at least modifying) existing collective mentalities.

The relationship between media and society can be analyzed in terms of “global implications”, in this case we speak of media **functions, precise influences** (effects

¹ The concept is used by Andrei Pleșu in *Faces and masks of transition*, Bogdan Ghiu in *Glass eye* for the analysis of the Romanian media phenomenon.

caused by “actions” of the press, media products), or **general missions** assigned to these systems.²

The term “*function*” often cumulates, as theorists of media communication interpreted, the idea of “**purpose**” – the stated or implied intention of the media to exercise some influence on receptors by its products, the idea of “**effect**” or “**consequence**” of distributed messages, and the idea of “**specific mission**” assigned to media (typically that of social “**model**” and “**moderator**”).

The theorists specialized in media communication have not yet reached full agreement, unanimously accepted, in terms of specific or “specialized” functions of the media in general and even less for **print media**, which is subject of our study³. We will not adopt any of the typologies of functions already known, in order not to be accused of partisanship. We will rather try to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the media, in order to see how valid and solid is the establishment of “**new social centre of power**” ruled by the press, and how many illusions it hides (carefully it is true), its great empire, how easily it can be broken, etc. The major discrepancy between essence and appearance in the media is the main paradox that underlies in its existence.

It is already a common statement, which has acquired the status of saying that “an informed person is worth two people”. Media in general and newspapers in particular have turned this “aphorism” into a self advertising slogan, raised it to the rank of “**belief**”, of principle that should not and will not deviate, at least declaratively and formally. “*The fact that media informs us is not necessarily related to a declaratory assumed and targeted intention*”⁴, say insiders. “*It would not exert such a function if it were not a premise of it, a desire and search for information, due to the need for people to control their immediate environment, to know what is happening in their world*”.⁵

² Mihai Coman, *Introduction to media system*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2000.

³ Significant for the analysis of media functions are the typologies proposed by H. Lasswell, L. Thayer, M. Real, etc.

⁴ Mihai Coman, *Backstage of the fourth power*, Polirom, Iași, 2002.

⁵ Jean Claude Bertrand, *An introduction to written and spoken media*, Polirom, Iași, 2000.

It is perfectly true, as seen through the opaque mirror of acceptance, which will never raise questions and will never cause dilemmas. It is true that information is essential, vital, especially in the Romanian society - who lived the cruel experience of a total information vacuum during the communist period, when it could not get authentic information, but counterfeit. Ironically, now our media falls into the other extreme. In the post-revolutionary contemporary period, we witnessed an informational “**boom**” directly proportional to the social dynamics in the “speed century”, but also with media inflation and the demand for “thrills” from the consumers of media (it's what it was called **supersaturating information** of the Romanian society).⁶

Through highly suggestive advertisements is induced to the members of society the feeling of safety conditioned to remaining under the influence of the information source and the spectrum of dangers when we get away from it (*“Hear more clearly! See more! Understand everything!”*, *“The most important news in real time”*, *“We make the best selection, you make the best choice!”*)

Information is, under contemporary society conditions, an **economic good** as concrete as any other raw material, although its characteristics are different from those that we could find in any textbook of economics. First, information is not consumed after consumption, but only demonetized through a kind of “obsolescence”, it loses currency or interest that might cause to people, usually in favour of another “product” of the same type, in favour of other information.

This is not the only difference between information and other economic goods, which we might call “classic”. Some of its structural- necessary features are: information can flow from source to destination, but it cannot be changed - which means that it does not deplete from the source while delivering to the addressee. Information can be multiplied without quantitative effects on source, its consumption does not lead to saturation but increases the amount of information consumed and it does not require raw materials or energy sources.

⁶ The concept is used by Andrei Pleșu in *Faces and masks of transition* and Bogdan Ghiu the *Glass eye* for the analysis of the Romanian media.

Of course, each of these elements can bare amendments: for example, it is true that information is not exhausted from the source by the time of its dissemination, but most times, just sharing it dramatically reduces the value, then multiplying it has no “quantitative“ effects on the source. The mere repetition can produce a strong suggestibility of receptors, and has an undeniable effect on the psyche, and the idea of ”information saturation” is more and more invoked in today's society, given that it is no longer subject of censorship, because freedom of expression is recognized by law and guaranteed by the Constitution.

In these circumstances arise, logically and “bound to”, a few inherent questions. How does the media in general, the press in particular, inform us what criteria and principles (other than the traditional ones - as “**current**”, “**spatial and temporal proximity**”, “**high interest**” to the public) underlie the selection and ranking of information, how are they passed to the public by implementing various strategies of language?

“The reality was, as almost always, beyond scenarios. Since 1989 scenarios and stories have diversified galloping either because events became richer, more stimulating, or because freshly recovered freedom could show her fabulous side. The specialist in scenarios is one of the most active figures of the current period.”⁷

And the journalist is often a perfect scriptwriter. The reality is only one, but extremely diverse and interpretable. Any text is nothing but recreation, retelling of a fact rooted in reality, and the story is made based on a scenario. The journalistic dilemma arises when the reality is “bathed” in banality, when it does not provide “news topics” according to the demand, when nothing so spectacular, out of common patterns happens.

Many times, the only fair solution to press would be to confirm what people already know, but information is not synonymous with banal confirmation, at least in the press.

⁷ Andrei Plesu, *A sect, scriptwriters*, article published in "The Dilemma" magazine, 1992.

I think that a detailed analysis of the functions of the press in terms of the current characteristics of the media is required:

A. The meta-discursive function, to which all other specific functions are tributary, has the ultimate imperative to gain and maintain target audience through various techniques, and even more, creating a dependency to its messages. The public (hungry for novelty) will not seek in media messages a confirmation of things known, but “**information**” about the issues and events of currency.

In such critical situations, the only solution of journalists is to capitalize the information at their disposal in an efficient manner. Most times, they choose the option to **create scenarios that distort reality more or less in favour of show** and the results of these scenarios are the pseudo-events promoted by the media through specific languages. The ability to **transform the common fact** into **event** and the **common person** into press **hero** release is considered even by some experts as an essential virtue of a journalist. This is one of the facets of an ironic attitude exhibited by press both towards the reality and to public opinion, which shall be unable to assess the real importance of facts and daily acts.

Events occur when there is an imbalance of “forces”, when the rules and default values of social organization are not followed.

The press promotes with predilection a **language of crisis**⁸, languages of conflict, supported and maintained by a series of adjacent sublanguages. The excess of negativity and violence encourages a preference for gloomy news. The language of terror and violence is cultivated; a bellicose and terrifying language to a hyperbolized increase of the informative value of the event and especially the degree of public's interest.

*“Heaven has no fun, so the most marketable story, a journalist's dream is a story about hell, about depravation of world.”*⁹

Under the pretext that it wants to be total and non- complaisant, the news (event, information) becomes poisonous. It arouses horror, without being able to purify, to

⁸ Laurențiu Șoitu, *Communication and Action*, European Institute, Iași, 1999.

⁹ Andrei Plesu, *The right to be informed*, Dilema Veche, No. 144, October 13th to 19th, 1995.

educate. For some time, “*to inform is to cultivate in a kinky way the proximity of catastrophe.*”¹⁰ There appears a **paradox of substance** to the press world. Although its quality is essentially informative, the **news** often has the effect of a “killing boomerang” on public and social assembly generally, destroying aesthetic values and inducing a state of permanent conflict.¹¹

The fact detached from reality and immediate actuality is generally a conflictual one, able to generate and maintain a crisis. Then an entire strategy of developing the scenario is applied, after a **belligerent premise** was formed, as we have seen. In order to do this, there are primarily used the **languages of authentication information**, or thesis, from which we started. In these circumstances, the journalist uses the *auxiliary language*, for persuasion or manipulation of the public, resulting in an immediate increase of the rate of newspaper merchantability.

- **Typing language and page layout language** are extremely important in this regard. In general large bombs news, topics of greatest interest, for which scenarios are very well built, are placed in strong position on the first page, occupying a significant proportion of this.

- **Titration language** is extremely important to increase the interest. Titles are usually bombastic, shocking, and often tremendous, they are the first to concur the crisis and its maintenance, they are the ones that sell the media product. As “**tone makes the music**”, the title sells newspapers. How can be termed this “**marketing strategy**”, if not as a variant of subliminal masked irony of the media?

The titles are backed by exciting, live, “exotic” photos, terrifying, shocking images that contribute to creating the conflict state initiated by the title.

- **Iconic language** in conjunction with the **titration** one, are the ones that respond to meta- discursive function of the press and its object - to love, to seduce and persuade, regardless of the methods used.

- The **colourist language** is not negligible.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ John Hartley, *News Discourse*, Polirom, Iași, 1999.

The premise of any press subject is often one of conflict or liable to cause a crisis. Obviously, there is a **subject** of the conflict, the premise from which it starts, the hypothesis, that can cover any area of reality. (The hypothesis may take the form of a conflict of interest, a statement that arises controversy, an action that violates natural laws of society – corruption acts at all levels – economic, political, legal – or actions that do not respect the values and moral principles – **atypical** behaviour – murder, rape, theft etc.). There are also the **actors** of conflict that become “**heroes**” of press through their involvement in events.¹²

After **establishing the premise**, the **languages of authentication information** are put into circulation. The methods of creating such languages are extremely varied, built on a principle similar to ironic farce, but their degree of transparency is much smaller.

Because reality is often falsified or distorted through them, these languages are considered “**harmful**” if they exceed the allowable limit of subjectivity. Thus, initially there has to be identified or build a credible source to confirm the information that is the plot of the conflict. It appears in the “scene” the so-called **argument from authority** that gives weight to information, increasing the reliability of it.

Through the languages of authentication, of confirmation of information are presented the views that are favourable to thesis, and that are designed to support and strengthen it. For the script to be as credible as possible, they put to circulation the **anti-source** to express the opposite view. At this level, the dynamic of the text reaches quite large values, the language used is incentive, participative, it is the threshold of transforming the **passive reader** into an **active reader**¹³, it’s the point where the **dissocializing of reading** occurs, transforming collective reading into individual reading.

¹² Daniela Roventă Frumușani, *Argumentation. Models and strategies*, All, Collection *Substantial*, Bucharest.

¹³ Umberto Eco, *Six walks in the narrative woods*, Pontica, Italian Library, Constanța, 1997.

Apparently, the press does not violate the rules, it even demonstrates fairness by providing the right of reply to the opposing side, the negative heroes. It is, however, only an appearance! A good script is the one that presents as many contrary points of view as possible, providing many angles of approach.

The journalist cleverly leads the reader on an ironic route and the more numerous the deviations are and diverse the perspectives, the more credible the scenario will be and the result will be the premeditated one. The harsher and more exciting the battle of replicas is, the more applauded the victory will be. Paradoxically, the anti-heroes of the events, the antithesis supporters are those who enjoy public appreciation, because it is assumed that they will bring out the truth in case the hypothesis is false.

A fragmentation of the thesis occurs. Although initially there is only one hypothesis, the anti- sources bring arguments that are contrary only for certain segments of the initial thesis therefore cannot be considered valid.¹⁴ The contrary arguments cannot be viewed as a whole. Therefore, for antithesis it is often used a **speculative** and **ambiguous language**, with visible linguistic ambiguities. The de-contextualization of statements that comprise the thesis determines infinite antitheses. The resemblance of the construction pattern of the press text with the ironic one in the rhetoric register is striking. The events and the information are treated in a rebus version. The “**scriptwriter**” does not trip on the problem of proof. He simply believes in his script and promotes it using the self-advertising function, which is so prominent for press texts.

*If you ask arguments, as it is so normal and you are entitled to do it, if you ask “on what do you rely?”, the answer comes quickly as an implied one. “Think for yourself!” This is followed by a baroque scaffolding of clever analogies, conclusive coincidences, of “irrefutable” syllogisms designed to transform belief in dogma”.*¹⁵

After presenting the antithesis by supporting the adverse viewpoints, through either eyewitness’ testimony, or other individuals involved, after the anti-heroes were

¹⁴ Caesar Segre, Collection *History-Culture-Criticism*, trans. Stephanie Mincu, Universe Publishing, 1986, ch. *Speech*.

¹⁵ Andrei Pleșu, *A sect, scriptwriters*, Dilemma, 1992.

created, they put into play the **languages to discredit the antithesis**, which are extremely varied. Placing arguments of the thesis in strong positions, stated in relatively academic language, credible and positivist, and the antithesis ones in a discriminatory position presented by a pejorative and obsolete language, colloquial, scandalous. The textual dynamics reaches the value of a “threshold”, a sum of media text. Discrediting antithesis is easy to make. We have seen that the antithesis is fragmentary and using the speculative art, the journalist can only discredit one of the points of antithesis, extrapolating on the ensemble built by **mosaic technique**. Herein lays the ontological irony of the press and the great inadequacy of the fans of scenarios. *“They do not explain the unseen through seen, not even the accidental through the substantial.”*

The information and events are not embedded in a series of cyclical and progressive series of similar and repeatable events. Everything “scriptwriters” do is to explain an accident with another, a first instance record by a fictive one. They do not have access to the “depth of the real”. The superficiality with which events are handled, logical inconsistency, the speculative arguments only legitimize our beliefs about the ironic nature of media. All “gaps of media system”, the continuous flow, time tyranny, greed for sensational, exacerbation of the authoritarian and meta-discursive function determines the journalist to always remain in the same plan. The phenomenology of press events is one on horizontal sections. It does not go deep enough to identify **archetypes** or **nuclei** of rationality. The scriptwriter of “bomb releases”, of incendiary events, is “a hybrid, uncertain of un-placing species”.

The journalist claims that he wants to fight the random through logical coherence and only manages to replace the immediate by probabilistic fiction. He seems to foresee through facts their secret order and only manages to double the confusion by secondary substrate confusion.

The proliferation of more or less reliable scenarios, makes tremendously difficult the task of the one searching for the right script and wants to know the truth about what happened in an event.

Obviously, the **actors of events** do not remain anonymous; they are **transformed into press “heroes”** either because of the scenario in which they play a lead role, either by **insistence language**, with which are “promoted” a cascading series of events involving the same characters. In this case we can speak of two types of heroes: protagonists of a single press event, who are “**accidental heroes**” whose image is promoted by accident (as was the case of Stelian Ogică, the winner of one million dollars at National Lottery who held the headlines for few days. There are also other random events promoted due to the circumstance of their production).

At the other extreme are the “**heroes made by press**”. In this case we talk about the actors of unclean business revealed by journalists, such as “the Boot Business”, Cigarette Business “, but we must consider the fact that **predilection for certain topics creates**, as **with ironic texts, types of characters**. Thus, the newspaper “Adevărul” (The Truth) is known for the strong focus on corruption cases at all levels and in all fields, thus creating, through the language of insistence for a certain kind of topics, the prototype of corrupt dignitary, the policeman, lawyers, corrupt authority. In counterparty, “Ziua” (“The Day”), for example, one of the tabloid newspapers of the current media landscape known by promoting terrifying, outrageous topics, created the image of under- mediocre social stratum (the portrait of the rapist, the pedophile, the corrupt business man).

Another typology of “media heroes” might be based on their involvement in various stages of the “eventful scenario “. Thus, the proponents of the thesis, sources of authentication of working hypothesis can be categorized as “**positive main heroes**”, given the **language strategies** on which they are built. The anti- sources are nothing but “**secondary characters**” generally **negative** and sources brought to discussion to discredit the antithesis, the negation of negation and implicitly supporting the thesis, can be classified as partisan characters “acolytes, collaborators of the hero”.

The key feature of all categories of heroes promoted by the media is that “**they are able to polarize the public attention on them**, sometimes approaching the portrait of the leader” and being primarily sellable. We are witnessing a massive invasion of

second-hand and third hand people, of secondary characters, because press heroes are rather celebrities built by press than personalities in the true meaning of the word.

*“The transition democracy has primarily turned **mediocrity into celebrity**, the chance given to poor endowment to impose itself with insolence, replacing the qualification through guts and moral legitimacy by a small opportunity instinct ”¹⁶.*

The press selects from the many daily events, those they find interesting, which respond best to its editorial interests that best fits on the target audience's expectations. Both the proposed event-hierarchy and the importance given to each topic release (the treatment of information, the position given to the event through page layout) vary from newspaper to newspaper. Hierarchy of events can be determined implicitly based on the criteria set out above, coupled with the interest to the public and respecting newspaper's policy and style.

The media tries this way to cover a wider field of information, fulfilling again the desideratum imposed by its meta- discursive function, to know everything that happens, to always be in the middle of events, not to miss a thing, to know where? what? and why? happens.

The **information offer** often exceeds **the tolerance limit of our ability to assimilate**.

“Information world suffers of obesity. We continually learn so many things that end up in amazement and nausea. It is clear that we were not designed to be contemporary to the rest of the planet, we cannot swallow all the information that we are given, we cannot live simultaneously all the dramas of the world and all its excitement ... ”¹⁷

As we observed by analyzing the construction of scenarios of press texts, the objectivity claimed by it is only an illusion, since all instruments of argument are purely speculative and subjective.

B. Another function that media claims to fulfill within society is the social-educational one, the **enculturation**. The press sets, imposes rules of behaviour,

¹⁶ Răzvan Tupa, *Frustration. An open list*, "The culture shop ", no. 1 April 2006.

¹⁷ Andrei Pleșu, *The right to be informed* , Dilemma, no. 146, November 2006.

forming new mentalities among the public. With the help of media, people assimilate prohibitions, requirements and restrictions, values and symbolic representations, categories of thought specific to a society. The press meets, by its content, individuals' and communities' need to perpetuate the common values and the identification with those models that a community considers to be “**patterns**” of action.

Most researchers consider that media messages are designed to confirm or strengthen the rules of a society, even when it presents deviant behaviour or violations of current regulations.

C. The enculturation function, of forming beliefs and attitudes in public opinion, should be correlated with the primary function of the press, that of **informing**. Under these conditions, some aspects at least contradictory occur.

I saw that press cultivates especially information with a high negativity degree, conflict states, major crises, i.e. “**catastrophe vicinity**”. Logically we are entitled to believe that through the information conveyed, press inculcates a warrior instinct among the public opinion. However, experts say the opposite. They argue that terrifying events reported in the press, serious violations of social order, would rather have the role of a vaccine that gives the public immunity.

D. **The formative function** of the press is often emphasized in its meta-discourse. Practice shows though that this function occurs only in the declarative level, it is mostly theoretical and less implemented.

In many of the subjects covered by the print media, topics of social origin are highlighted. Press promotes “**apparently**” the traditional values, the principles and doctrines introduced by the community. Social protection themes are present in newspapers, domestic violence, atypical behaviours are condemned by it. The press fights for respecting the Christian moral values and entrenched behavioural norms. Here arises what we call the “**value paradox**”. Although the treatment of such themes and topics would require the use of serious language, an exquisite expressive

prestige, the press uses an atypical language, inappropriate to treat such information with social impact and a presumed formative character.

We are dealing with a **double language**. One of the facets of language is the “traditionalist” academic one that respects the rules of the literary language imposed by public mentality. It is the seductive language, high impressionable that speculates the emotions of the reader, produces pity and compassion, causes emotional involvement, the language of unwavering principles.

The second facet of the language is the one that is specific to media by definition, the current language, of the immediate actuality that serves the function of meta-discourse and entertainment, the **language of the spectacular**. Therefore, the serious language is doubled and mined at the same time by a malicious, deconstructive and negative language. We assist not in strengthening myths and traditional principles, but rather in their deconstruction by promoting anti-values, or at least other social values, images and attitudes.

The press produces a boycott of tradition by promoting the language of the current, the suburban colloquial language, of pejorative terms, that are in antithesis with the academic ones.

Regarding the “enculturation” function, in the literal sense, reserves are also quite reasonable.

First, because of the fact that the daily press rarely promotes in its pages literary, artistic chronicles, which make rather the subject of journals. Where cultural events are mentioned, it is speculated particularly the entertaining side, and they are transformed into social events or enjoy a relatively small printing space, showing very low interest shown in such topics, and editorial policy oriented towards other types of information. The press turns culture into entertainment easily, thus violating traditional universally accepted norms. Vulgar show is preferred to academic aesthetic.

Because the media has the power to offer many models of behaviour, it is in an **ambivalent position** – it is required to exercise a neutral educational activity (in the

training of informed, educated people, aware of their social position and responsibilities). On the other hand, media are courted for its persuasive resources, for its power of influencing the behaviour of readers, individuals, and groups with political and economic interests.¹⁸

E. *“The media promptly assumes supreme powers, neglecting those that belong “de facto”. It is a kind of Parliament, a kind of government, a kind of public court. It knows what we need better than we know ourselves. It decides on our behalf what we will think, how we will entertain, who deserves our admiration, and who our contempt.”*¹⁹

It thus exceeds its role and functions that belong to it by the statute and this is another paradox that press establishes. This is how can be defined the over- function of the press, the **authoritarian function**, supported by meta-discourse.

The discrepancy between the purely speculative essence and ambivalence, and academism appearance cultivated in meta-discourse demonstrates the paradoxical nature of the media, which we showed by comprehensively analyzing the media functions and different languages used.

I.2. FEATURES; PRESS VIOLENCE

As I said, nowadays we are victims of a true **explosion of information**, which, on any view, cannot be beneficial to any individual, or group in which he lives. This **over-information** that often proves to be a **sub-information**, a **pseudo-information**, even a **mal-information** will cause in time, a “**generalized uniformity**” as Herbert Marcuse said in the paper entitled ***One-dimensional person***.

The representatives of the Frankfurt School (Habermas, Adorno, Horkheimer) also observed that the intrusion of market laws in the sphere of cultural production and thus to the media, **re-feudalizes the society**, makes the public **massified**.

¹⁸ Lucian Vasile Szabo, *Freedom and communication in media world*, Amarcord Publishing House, Timișoara, 1999.

¹⁹ Andrei Pleșu, *The right not to be informed*, art. published in *Dilemma*.

The transformation of the culture into commodity results in inhibiting the critical function of culture, it creates a mass culture,, opposite to a cultivate culture, a civilization of degraded leisure. The effects on public are of involution nature in cultural relation (the depreciation of intellectual effort and scholarship, generalized stereotypes and vulgarity, bad taste, emptiness ...).''²⁰

The tendency towards homogenization is due primarily to social factors and then to mass media which, instead of keeping the role of court balance, observation of reality and re-implanting them in people's consciences by accuracy, objectivity, expressiveness, stoning and so on, operates as a shaping homogenizer factor with effects – in experts' opinion - more negative than positive.

About the possible positive effects of media it has been extensively discussed, focusing on their ability to trigger reactions, opinions and attitudes of the public towards the media message and overall towards life and society.

“Television and overall media have a monopoly on modeling the brain of a very important part of the population”²¹.

There are intense negative aspects that media not only reveals, but often - from titles - makes them absolutely “dazzling” (through, obviously, over-media), thus acquiring a role of **social amplifier**.

“A newspaper without murders and robberies, rape and incest, bestiality and sodomy, sacrilege, incendiary letters and false, executions and battles, is said to be without news”²², was said since 1783. Even earlier, in a Letter to Simon de Troyes, the great fabulist La Fontaine believed that any newspaper maker pays tribute to the Devil.²³

This addiction to media offer increasingly focused on **vulgarity**, **aggression**, even **triviality** has triggered controversy among media representatives and the defenders of

²⁰ T. Adorno, *La télévision et les patterns de la culture de masse*, 1954, reprinted in RESEAUX, 44-45/1990, CNET, Paris, 1990, cited in Ioan Drăgan's *Paradigms of mass communication - Media society horizon*, Part I, Publishing House and Press "Șansa" SRL, Bucharest, 1996.

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *About Television*, translated by B. Ghiu, Meridiane, Bucharest, 1998, p 17.

²² David Randall, *Universal Journalist. Practical Guide for written press*, trans. By Alexandru Brăduț Ulmanu, Polirom, Iași, 1998, Series Media, Collection Collegium, p. 207.

²³ Guy Lochard, Henri Boyer, *Media communication*, trans. by Ceangălău B. European Institute, Iași, 1999, p. 7.

traditional morality; in many countries, including ours, new discussions take place about these issues, including pornography, violence, trivial entertainment programs, the systematic inclination toward “ordinary”, “coarse”, even “suburban”.

*“Media are the most powerful means of diffusion and infiltration of ideas, opinions, and trends of thought. No other can be so useful, and so dangerous (...). We all are unconsciously, tributaries of media, our newspapers’ slaves “.*²⁴

In accordance with these views, we find that press takes a role of “**agenda of reality**”, often inappropriate, suggesting utopias and intangible ideals (*emphasizing the different* – and the diversion of entertainment, we would add - *filling this precious space with void, with nothing or almost nothing, the media does nothing but to eliminate relevant information [necessary to the citizen]*”²⁵) or: “*The diverse facts are those facts which cause diversion. One of the basic principles of the conjurors is to draw attention to something different from what they do.*”²⁶

Thus it is justified to ask the question: **Does press represent a psycho-social reality defining to the human condition, does it reflect correctly its readers’ behaviour and way of thinking? Does it contribute – and if so, to what extent – to the amplitude of individual and social violence phenomenon?**

An explanation of the increasingly common use of violence of any kind in mass media lies in the commercial foundation on which press is laid. The obsession of a large circulation, of merchantability, requires public’s subliminal seduction by *captatio benevolentiae* morbid-insidious type. This myth of the “infected press” to be quasi-condemned to eternally produce “industrial” quantities of material to sell, regardless of the effects it can have on its beneficiaries, does nothing but create anxiety, more or less justified fears. It reveals “... *the professional cynicism of media producers*”²⁷, confirming repeatedly the observation of French researchers Boyer and

²⁴ Eugene Filotti, *Cultural policy*, Romanian Social Institute, Bucharest, p.163.

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Television, journalism and policy*, trans. by Aliza Ardeleanu, Meridiane, Bucharest, 1999, pp.76-94.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 17.

²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Television, journalism and policy*, trans. by Aliza Ardeleanu, Meridiane, Bucharest, 1999, pp.84.

Lochard²⁸, that “many media components are put into the service of a form of” *psychological rape* “on individuals”.

A careful analysis of the content of newspapers highlighted quite often a tendency of journalists to use more than striking titles that are not always supported by the text of the material release. The title contains inflections, references, much harsher expressions, more violent than what is actually reported in the article, which can be quite moderate and objective. In many newsrooms, titles are given by editors “specialized” in the technique of “making a mountain out of a molehill”. The goal is undoubtedly forcing the temptation. Such titles rely on multiple strategies, but rather simplistic to *captatio*, including colloquial style, with inflections of suburban oral language and the “pigmentation” with peripheral expressions, slang vocabulary, licentious metaphors, sometimes downright trivial.

Studies on media violence have been recorded since the '60s when numerous systematic research were made - studies and laboratory experiments and also field raids - which had the common aim to establish the right relation between violent behaviour and violence presented in mass media (Seymour Feshbach made the first experiment in this direction in 1961). These studies were carried out taking into account several factors:

- **socio-cultural-historical context;**
- **reference groups;**
- **opinions, attitudes, and socio-psychological features.**

However, what is meant *de facto et de iure*, by **violence**? Who are its **actors** and the **factors** or **circumstances** that generate it and in which it is accomplished?

Violence is, in a narrow sense, the behavioural component of aggression involving direct and intense action used to violate the physical, moral or psychic integrity of some individuals or communities and, in a wider sense, violent means also the situation in which aggression is exerted on oneself: suicide, self-flagellation, mutilation, etc..

²⁸ Guy Lochard, Henri Boyer, *Quoted Work.*, p 7.

The actors, those taking part in the actions of violence are:

- the **attacker** - the person who commits the violent act;
- the **victim** - the person who supports the action;
- the **circumstance** - the circumstance where the violent fact takes

place and that is particularly important as psychological effect, as the transformation of victim's personality.

1. **Violence** manifests externally as an action (physical, moral or verbal), but it is also an emotional state.

In **attacker's** case, this is manifested by paroxysmal feeling of the initial impulse towards the "attack", the desire to harm others and its subsequent transformation into action.

The **victim**, unlike the attacker, may have a paradoxical behaviour: on the one hand, the violent act may cause a sense of fear, pain (physical or mental), frustration, and on the other hand – the feeling of revenge as active response, who can become, in turn, an attacker.

Violence as a social phenomenon is growing and its gravity does not derive from the intensity, but rather from the effects produced physically and especially mentally, depending on each individual.

2. **The general factors of violence or the circumstances in which violence occurs** have a special importance in the phenomenon itself and on the individual in its dual aspect (victim and attacker). Out of these, we mention the most important in influencing the individual behaviour and trigger the aggressive attitude:

- school;
- family;
- social environment;
- culture and education level;
- individual personality.

The first environment in which an individual generally knows violence is **family**. We find, unfortunately, a sharp increase of family violence cases, both on children and

between spouses. Usually the reasons are due to high alcohol consumption, social problems (unemployment, low wages, lack of a home, large number of children whose parents can not provide the minimum necessary and so on), pretexts that lead, scalar, to a) verbal aggression, b) physical aggression, going even to c) criminal acts. Shortcomings and tensions manifested within family or entire communities have always existed, but the extent they reached in the recent years is due to the stressful period of “transition” which occurs in Romania and which affects, according to statistics, an ever-greater number of people.

School as a next to family environment and in close contact with it can also be a driver of violence. The child may become the victim of violence from peers and teachers and an aggressor whose actions arise from its predisposition to violence, or from education and family atmosphere.

We cannot neglect as generators of physical and language violence the “**street**”, “**block**”, “**neighborhood**”, “**discos**”, “**bars**”, “**shows**” (especially outdoors), “**arenas of struggle**” “**stadiums**”, where the passion awakened by “race”, “confrontation” or the domination instinct leads either to violent behaviour or the sub-cultural language, slang. Environments and contexts that produce violence are found permanently and everywhere; everything depends on us whether and to what extent we let them affect our existence.

The press, in its rush for the sensational, to trigger strong reactions to its beneficiaries, and trying to resist competition, provides real performances of symbolic violence. Social violence is a feature of any society; it shapes and creates expectations and values. Its degree of manifestation is directly proportional to the stability of society. An unstable society with an unbalanced economic situation, dominated by conflicts is much more prone to violence of any kind, than a strongly-built society.

Since its origins, the press was blamed for abusive practices, whose means of manifestation varies from one political regime to another, from one country to another, from one type of culture and mentality to another. Media are accused of

exhibiting often a moral mediocrity, for the purposes of promoting pseudo-values according to which human relationships are based on brute, “pure” force, being resolved, usually by violence. It is however difficult to give verdicts on the impact, more or less predictable, of a press of sensation on its audience.

The American press model focused on the reflection of a cruel reality, of a growing violence has been the subject of numerous studies indicating **the existence of a certain connection between media violence and real violence**. (It is known that at some point, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson appointed a commission to study television violence and its influence on the public. In turn, the American Congress made an extensive research of the cases and forms of televised violence (acc. Melvin L. Defleur, Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of mass communication*).

Various newspapers have hoped that they will increase circulation by reporting acts of violence (robbery, murder, rape, etc..) with a detailed description of the massacred bodies, weapons and procedures used, with titles and images often unbearable, which violates not only common sense but also basic ethical journalistic norms.

Researcher Gina Stoiciu defined this kind of populist or spectacular media “**the press of the four S’s**”²⁹ (sex, scandal, nauseating, spectacular).

Regarded this way, we find the general tendency of the press to provide *as much as possible about nothing and as little about anything significant*, as evidenced by an editorial signed by Acad. Dan Berindei in *Tomis* magazine: “*Weighing according to sensational and not to the meaning of the news is also abusive and inappropriate applied (...); it does not serve – in its manipulative composition of disproportionate cultivation of the sensational - the real interests of society*”.

This led to the stage where the reader is more interested in how many murders, rapes, robberies happened in his spatial and temporal proximity, how many people died wounded by Pitbull dogs and so on, than the publication of a book, the premiere of a show or a movie, a political decision with major impact. This disappointing finding of the coverage of an increasingly distorted reality leads us to agree with the harsh

²⁹ Gina Stoiciu, *Operational guidelines in mass communication research*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1981, p.78.

irony contained in the already famous phrase “*Good news, no news*”. A negative connotation induced by the aggression and vulgarity typical for this context was stereotyping the social interaction. The topics discussed, regardless of the source field, were loaded with exaggerated emotionality, and were assigned irrational, subjective features.

Assessing, even empirically (although our table in the Appendix provides also a statistical basis), the violence cases presented in the pages of our national dailies, we might conclude that in this world nothing good, beautiful happens, that all our existence is marked by murders, miseries, the miserable.

The evolutions toward publicizing violence have sparked the most vehement critical reactions, springing from the belief that it is “*like a poison, acting more intense, as the dose is stronger.*”³⁰ In the same line of interpretation is also Șerban Foarță, who speaks about a “demonic press” “when it “*establishes on itself, in a source of events, when from a simple receptacle and/or mirror of them, reaches in the position of generating them itself uncontrollably and malignant, like a tumor.*”³¹

I will remind you three of the theses that were stated by sociologists to explain the inclination (a priori/synthetic) of the readers towards materials reflecting negative, violent aspects of the society.

- **thesis of the cathartic effect**, according to which the release of frustration is accomplished by a symbolic participation in media violence;

- **awakening of violence thesis** through which sociologists consider that exposure to aggressive stimuli will increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour;

- **hardener effect thesis**, especially for people who are emotionally and socially unstable.

We called **divergences** those violence acts which are strictly verbal (more “lively” discussions, insults, serious / criminal accusations disputes, protests) to distinguish

³⁰ Ioan Drăgan, cited in O. Burgelin, *Communication de masse*, SGPP, Paris, 1970, p.219.

³¹ Șerban Foarță, *Double Regime (diurnal/nocturnal) of the press*, Amarcord Publishing, Timișoara, 1997, p.21.

them from violence acts with physical effects (not just moral), which can be exerted on individuals (eg: robbery) or property (eg: fire).

On a physical violence level, here are its manifestation forms:

- fight;
- theft;
- robbery, armed robbery;
- rape;
- homicide, infanticide;
- suicide, self-harm;
- massacre.

Statistically speaking, the prevalent types of violence are: murder, fight, rape, followed by other forms it can take.

Media violence has already become a surrogate of news of a real value to guide everyday life or stimulate the intellect. If it does not lead to aggression (as many of the credible specialist state, see for example Pierre Bourdieu, see also Gerbner, who say that television violence - and, in general, the media - influence human behaviour by modeling people's beliefs - *cultivation*), it contributes in the "best" case, to installing a sense of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, self-depreciation.

Violence of language is mostly generated by violence and the circumstances that *produce* it, and which also *reproduce* it, creating social representations that trigger mimicry. Specifically, in journalism, violence of language is – in the dominant mentality of a certain type of publications – “quasi-definite recipe” of snap, of luring the reader/buyer.

Violence of language generally reflects the violence of the real, as a form of its translation into printed page. We can say that in direct proportionality, the more a society is “set up”, the more constant and sedimented (eg: Switzerland), the bigger the coefficient of amenity, the “gentleness” and peaceful language in its press columns are.

Vocabulary and violent phrases in the post-revolutionary media rooted in a linguistic unloading, logical up to a point, on an emotional level, manifested after the fall of communism, in which functioned both censorship and wooden language. More or less aggressive verbal slips are promoted strongly and systematically. Linguistic violence, once unleashed, became defiant of taboos.

Language can often be a perfidious “criminal”, an insidious mediator of attitudes and a coverer of unexpected virtual ties.

The recrudescence of slang expressions, especially among young people, should not be ignored, because not only do they schematize them, narrowing their expressive repertoire, but also, through the ridiculous germs that they contain, it often leads to a cruel stylistic poverty. Used with great frequency, violent language can cause a “dulling” of the sensitivity of communication partners, paving the way for true expression of individual violence as a *threat* to others or even as *physical assault*.

As language can seduce, it can as well hurt: “*Media are two-way spicy, piercing as a sword and hot as a condiment.*”³²

I.3. PARADIGMS OF MASS COMMUNICATION FROM A DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

Beginning with the second decade of the twentieth century, communication is linked to the empirical project to develop a new social science, primarily through **Chicago School**, whose supremacy lasts until the beginning of the Second World War. The ‘40s bring into focus a new project, **Mass Communication Research**, which, to solve this request of mass communication management, introduces a scheme of functional analysis, moving the research towards quantitative measurements.³³

At the base of the conceptual device of **mass communication researchers** current, from 1927, was the book of Harold D. Lasswell, “Propaganda Technique in the World War”. The First World War was the first global confrontation where entire

³² Șerban Foarță, *quoted work*, p.28.

³³ Paul Dobrescu, Alina Bârgăoanu, *School from Chicago*, in the Magazine „Romanian Sociology”, no. 1-2/2003.

populations have played active roles and coordinated in the effort against enemies. This new kind of war was in fact a measure of the production capacity of a nation against another nation's capacity. The total war required the exploiting of all the resources of the nation. It has become essential to mobilize feelings and loyalty, to induce hatred and fear of enemies to people, to maintain the moral in front of deprivation. The way to achieve them was **propaganda**.³⁴

For Lasswell propaganda meant from now on democracy. *"Propaganda is the only way to ensure the adherence of masses: it is also more economical than violence, corruption or other governmental techniques of its kind. Being a simple instrument, it is neither moral nor immoral than <<water pump handle>>. It can be used for positive purposes or negative purposes"*.³⁵

In the post-war period it was outlined a general opinion on the possibility of mass media communication to shape public opinion to guide the masses towards any viewpoint desired by the communicator. There was of course the example of the great impact of the wartime propaganda, which seemed to provide reasonable evidence that the media are powerful, Lasswell concluded *"that they are new hammer and anvil of the social solidarity"*.³⁶

Who says what, by what channel, to whom and with what effect? This formula, which made Lasswell famous, was used in 1948 to equip with a conceptual framework the **functionalist sociology of media**. Translated in terms of research areas it means: control analysis, content analysis, communication means analysis, audience analysis and impact analysis.³⁷ In practice, however, attention was paid to the analysis of content and, in particular, analysis of the effects.

According to Lasswell, the communication process fulfils three main **functions** in society: *"a. environmental monitoring, revealing everything that could threaten or affect the value system of a community or the parts that form it; b. putting in relation the components of a society, to produce a response towards environment c. social*

³⁴ Melvin De Fleur, *quoted work*, pag. 165.

³⁵ A. Mattelart, M. Mattelart, *quoted work.*, pag. 25.

³⁶ Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*.

³⁷ Constantin Schifirneț, *Sociology*, S.N.S.P.A., Bucharest, 2000.

legacy transmission”.³⁸ To these Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton adds the fourth function: entertainment.

Robert Merton³⁹, summarizes the postulates of structural functionalism about the nature of society as follows:

- A society can be best represented as a system of interdependent elements: it is an organization of interconnected, repetitive, and transformed into patterns activities.
- Such a society naturally tends toward a state of dynamic equilibrium: if there is an imbalance, different forces will be activated and will tend to restore stability.
- All repetitive activities in a society contribute to its state of equilibrium.
- At least one of the repetitive activities become patterns, from a society are essential for its existence.⁴⁰

Merton applied these postulates in the study of mass communication. Media and the process of mass communication are based on repetitive actions become “patterns” within the social system in which they operate. The addictions between media and other social systems affect daily activities and even the way in which media are used. Mass communication can be enumerated along with the other indispensable components of the social structure, without which the contemporary society would not be able to exist.

The idea that the organization or the structure of a society offers it the stability source is as old as social philosophy. In *Republica*, Platon formulated the analogy between society and an organism, seen as a system of element correlated in a dynamic equilibrium. This idea was borrowed by occidental thinking and became the main framework for the analysis of societies used by Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim⁴¹.

Paul Lazarsfeld is one of the founders and representatives of the empiric move which he calls “administrative research”, and manages to focus around this circle of studies, many of the older Vienna Circle members. Karl Robert Merton, close to this Vienna

³⁸ Ioan Drăgan, *quoted work*.

³⁹ Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, III: Free Press, 1949, chapter 1.

⁴⁰ Ilie Bădescu, *The history of sociology*, Ed. Porto Franco, Galați, 1996.

⁴¹ Melvin De Fleur, *quoted work*.

circle, pleads with Lazarsfeld for a functionalist sociology, and together with Frank Stanton opens with a series of quantitative studies on public.

Lazarsfeld conceives the existence of three types of effects: activation of latent attitudes, strengthening, and confirmation of attitudes, conversion or change of attitudes and effects.⁴²

Since the '40s, media approaches have been divided into two main trends: **empirical** and **critical**.

The **empirical trend** is characterized by two features: - use of empirical research methods of communication in terms of audience and its impact on society and individuals and objectification of ideas for improving communication to increase performance in broadcast and reception of messages.

In fact, the empirical trend attempts by real systematic investigations on the media, to demystify its omnipotence conclusion. The prevailing idea at that time expressed the belief that the media has almost unlimited capacity to influence people's behaviour.

The **critical trend** - is rather a philosophical and political approach on the contemporary society and the role of communication in society. The objective of the school is mostly theoretical and to demystify, to decrypt media's role in the alienation and massification of society.

The critical trend develops a set of theoretical analysis with a critical character on the formation of mass societies. As a *“critical current and articulated around the reflections on mass culture, it is more philosophical and speculative, influenced by the traditions of European sociology from the late 19th century and describes the transition from a traditional society to modernity and mass society”*.⁴³

Therefore, the objective of the critical research was not to discover how to improve the system, but to demystify, to change it radically.

⁴² Paul P. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice*, New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944, apud Victor Traian; Irina Stanciugelu, *The theory of communication*, S.N.S.P.A., Bucharest, 2001.

⁴³ Philippe Breton, *L'explosion de la communication*, Paris, 1989, apud Mihai Dinu, *Communication-fundamental marks*, Scientific Publishing, Bucharest, 1997.

The approaches of critical theorists have a largely ideological and political character: their conclusion is that in the age of mass media the manipulation possibilities of the dominant ideology are in a way that the phenomenon of massification and alienation comes to alter deeply the very essence of democracy.

The two trends, especially the critical trend, were set up in the following context⁴⁴:

- Nazi propaganda and the start to massive using of the radio for propaganda purposes;
- the widespread use, by all belligerents, of the radio and other means of propaganda and contra-propaganda during the Second World War;
- propaganda confrontations during the Cold War;
- the explosion of cultural industries of the new media after the '50s.
- the monopoly on radio and television - public in Europe, commercial in the U.S.
- the experience of American researchers, refugeeed from Europe under the pressure of the Nazism expansion, was a favorable context for the idea of a close connection between totalitarian regimes establishment and mass- media and their perceived role as a mechanism for manipulation of the masses.

Critical theories can be interpreted as a generalization of a particular historical situation, especially the misuse of mass media by totalitarian regimes (Nazi and communist), when the State claimed the monopoly on legitimate messages.

The empirical researches, which build heavily in the '50s, had a positive role in removing or making relative the mostly speculative conclusions of critical theories. They propose a scientific attitude opposite to the ideological reflections about culture and mass communication, on the role of mass communication in the formation and movement of opinions and making individual decisions, in voters' and buyers' behaviour. The empirical trend cannot be absolved of some deficiencies, but these were mainly methodological⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Douglas Kellner, *Media culture*, European Institute, Iași, 2001.

⁴⁵ Drăgan, Ioan, *Sociology of mass communication*, S.N.S.P.A., Bucharest, 2001.

From a diachronic point of view, the two trends have seen valuations and revaluations due to the new acquisitions of research and to different historical configurations. For example, if during the war culture was centered on the persuasive function, after the war, with the entry into a normal socio-political context, focus was on information and entertainment function. But the two views have dominated the debate and research for about two decades after the war, until the '60s, although this relationship was less controversial than posterity would have wished, and more with dialogue, dubbing and exchange of arguments.⁴⁶

The sources of the critical current, in the '40s and '60s, can be identified in sociological or philosophical theories present in the European thought of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Here should be included both conservative, anti-capitalist theories, directed against “mass society”, which were advocating on behalf of traditions and order, founded by the aristocracy, and elite culture (F. Nietzsche, G. Le Bon, I. Ortega Gasset, etc..) and leftist theories - such as those of philosophers and sociologists reunited in 1923, at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. In fact, the critical current itself is philosophical and political approach to contemporary society and the role of communication in this society. Its critical vision is reflected not only on the type of the analyzed society, but also on empirical research, to which it relates.

It should be noted however, that the use of the expression “critical school” is damaging for the understanding of the phenomenon, in the sense that it prints a reductionist vision: more correct would be to talk about the several schools of critical thinking that we could better relate to its foundation and theoretical impulse – namely the **functionalist sociology**.⁴⁷

What the functionalist sociology describes as “mechanisms of social adjustment” is suspected by critics of operating a symbolic violence and is perceived as a means of power and domination. Thus, Armand Mattelart and Michele Mattelart argue that, *“inspired by a mechanism far from orthodoxy, the Frankfurt School philosophers*

⁴⁶ Kellner, Douglas, *quoted work*.

⁴⁷ Habermas, Jurgen, *Knowledge and communication*, Political Publishing, Bucharest, 1983.

exiled to the United States find in the becoming of culture reasons to unrest since the early '40s. Twenty years later, structuralism movement, born in Frankfurt, opposes to the empiricist method the rediscovery of ideology.”⁴⁸

In the UK, in the same '60s, the Birmingham Centre inaugurated the so-called “cultural studies”.

Therefore, criticism has a long history, from the Enlightenment philosophy of the eighteenth century, and a recent one, starting in the Weimar Republic period. It was then that some intellectuals, including philosopher Max Horkheimer and economist Friedrikh Pollk, set the foundations of the Institute of Social Research, affiliated with the University of Frankfurt - in fact the first German research institution with an open Marxist orientation.

These early studies, focused on criticizing the capitalist economy, do not have as object the mass society as a product of culture means, but as the product of a political and economic platform. They have as subject the two German workers' parties and their economist optic - but methodology and the results of the study printed a more neo-Marxist approach, whose mark is not only Marx's “Capital”, but also the works of S. Freud, borrowed tools from the philosophy of culture, ethics, Psycho- sociology and, “abyssal psychology”.

At the same time, another Austrian psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich, developed several essays on mass psychology of fascism, which is the first Freud - Marxist approach to symbolic management mechanisms in the authoritarian system, and evidence of the gradual separation from the canonical Marxism, his theses being challenged by the international communist movement.

History continues dramatically after Hitler took power, as Max Horkheimer is removed, and so are the other Hebrew founders of the institute, and the only fact that allows their survival as a group of researchers is the strong funding they receive from some businesspersons of the Hebrew community. Columbia University gives them one wing of the building where Leo Lowenthal and Max Horkheimer restart their

⁴⁸ Mattelart, A.; Mattelart, M., *quoted work*.

activities, and, since 1938 also T. Adorno. From this point, ambiguities of tiebreaker / collaboration between the two trends start, through small collaborations and mutual support. Adorno answers Lazarsfeld's initiative to collaborate on a project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, through which Lazarsfeld hoped to achieve a convergence between the European theory and the American empiricism, to revitalize the “administrative research” - whose representative he declares himself, through critical research, although the effect proves to be of a minimal successful. The collaboration ends in 1939 - because the opposition between the two mentalities seems impossible to overcome as the more objective epistemological incompatibility. Less questionable results are those of each critic obtained individually: in the early '40s, Adorno and Horkheimer create the concept of cultural industry, but on this line, they overestimate art as a revolutionary ferment, which prevents him to analyze all its aspects. This can be noted in a previous work, almost a decade before, of another representative of the Frankfurt School - Walter Benjamin - “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1933). His inclusion in the criticism group is argued only by the nature of his work, because, despite Adorno's requests, Benjamin did not leave Europe, but remained an original of the Frankfurt School. He was one of the oldest in terms of undeniable works: if Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis began to eclipse in the late '70s, Walter Benjamin was of interest even in the '80s.⁴⁹ The critical circle seems to close after the war, when Adorno and Horkheimer return to Germany, where they reunite with Leo Lowenthal and Herbert Marcuse who, by the mere fact that they resisted in the Nazi Germany throughout that period of turmoil of history and intellectual life, have different cultural destinies. Leo Lowenthal imposed himself in analyzing mass culture through a study of the biographies of popular magazines. Herbert Marcuse remained however the most prominent figure of the Frankfurt School since the '60s, so that in '68 are evoked “the three M: Marx, Mao, Marcuse” - and Marcuse's work “One-dimensional man” (1964) had a direct influence in the ideological struggle of the epoch. In a strange way, considering his

⁴⁹Ioan Drăgan, *Sociology of mass communication*, S.N.S.P.A., Bucharest, 2001.

ethnic and cultural identity, being a fierce critic of the culture and civilization of the bourgeois and of the historical formations of the working class, Marcuse wants to expose “the new forms of political domination”. These forms, “under the appearances of rationality of a world shaped by technology and science, propagate the irrationality of a model of social organization which, instead of releasing the individual, it enslaves it”. The difference between his work and “Dialectic of Enlightenment” by Adorno and Horkheimer is the one between a critique in which the instrumentation of works becomes the instrumentation of individuals and vice versa.

Heir of this type of criticism, Jurgen Habermas develops his own theory of rationality in response to Marcuse, in “Technology and science as ideology”, after he had written, in 1962, “The Public Sphere. The Archaeology of Publicity as a Constitutive Dimension of the Bourgeois Society”. Habermas continues the works of the Frankfurt School on a philosophical and less sociological level (by mass culture theory, authoritarian personality studies) and takes from the exposures of Horkheimer and Adorno ideas about manipulating opinion, standardization, massification and atomization of the public.⁵⁰

For Marcuse, Adorno and Horkheimer’s pessimistic observations, that the emancipator potential of science and technology is intended to be at the service of the reproduction of the domination and servitude system, Habermas proposes as an alternative to public degeneration, the restoring of communication forms in public space extended to society as a whole. And since the history of intellectual tracks is unlimited, they themselves will be “succeeded” - from the '50s-'60s by some American authors who developed discussions about cultural industry / mass culture / mass society: Dwight MacDonald, Edward Schils, Daniel Bell.

We are talking about the paradox that Ioan Dragan noticed in the cited work. “*The system of mass communication and mass society itself are criticized by theorist critics (Adorno, Benjamin, Habermas, Marcuse) on behalf of the values and principles of the bourgeois democratic revolution that made them possible. These are: cultural*

⁵⁰ Jurgen Habermas, *quoted work*.

and political system designed by Enlightenment thinkers is considered a desirable prototype, distorted by the development of capitalism and betrayed in mass society, which, socially and culturally, as well as in terms of political democracy, is an involution.”⁵¹

I.4. MEDIA CULTURE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Media culture is a relatively recent historical phenomenon that in most developed countries represents a form of culture with a strong commercial character, produced for profit and disseminated in the form of commodities. The commercialization and consumerism of the media culture has many important consequences. First, the production for profit makes those who control this industry make products that will be popular, that will be sold, requiring the need to shock, to break conventions. Media culture largely promotes the interests of the class that controls the major media conglomerates thus giving voice to some conflicting positions between competing groups. Media culture is in a certain sense the dominant culture, it replaced the forms of the elevated culture as the center of cultural attention and the impact on a large number of people.⁵²

In 1947, Th. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, launched the term “culture industry” to refer to all the techniques of industrial production and reproduction of cultural works, after initially in early versions of the text, had used the term “mass culture”. Cultural industry triggers a process of simplification of the major culture to make it accessible to semi-educated masses and, in order to produce more and cheaper, companies that invest in “mass” culture introduce the standardization of production.⁵³

⁵¹ Ioan Drăgan, *quoted work*.

⁵² Douglas Kellner, *Media culture*, European Institute, Iași, 2001, p. 20-100.

⁵³ Mihai Coman, *Introduction in the mass-media system*, Polirom Publ., Bucharest, 1999, p. 55-69.

According to Bernard Miege⁵⁴, all consumer goods may be reduced to two major types of products: cultural and informational. The first is distinguished by the randomness of the value in use (the art object does not escape the conditioning of taste and fashion, factors involving variations and unexpected fluctuations) and by limited possibilities of production and serialization (every community has a particular cultural code and does not accept, understand, consume goods produced by successful recipes from other companies). Information assets are able to be easily copied, reproduced, interchangeable, and the price that they are purchased with, may not be related to the value of usage.

Dinu Rachieru raises in “Literary Conversations” the question “Media culture - a subculture?”, saying: *“Media culture, abdicating from the standards of high culture, seems to be a one-way traffic, forcing a passive absorption, encouraging selfishness and conformity on the background of the informational noise of the age. Media “captivity”, turning us into consumers (amorphous mass), reduces the so-called role of negotiators, although sub-cultural responses (activities, styles, rituals), embracing even a spectacular look inside the mother-culture provokes conflicting relations in awarding cultural space (through the imposition of sub-cultural identities). [...] Without the risk of being mistaken, we can say, as a conclusion, that these symbolic responses reinforce an ancient and alarming finding: media culture remains a medium culture, a sub-culture, in fact, the real mass culture of our time. It’s a time, let’s not forget, that universalizes it in the apocalypse of massification through industrialization of the cultural product and widespread of the consumption (by abundance and accessibility).”*⁵⁵

Gilles Lipovetsky argues that in today's world “mass culture is a consumer culture, made entirely for immediate pleasure.” As the cultural object and pleasure are consumed the act of consumption, both the product and the interest for them must constantly be refreshed, thus creating waves of “trends”.

⁵⁴ Bernard Miege, *La société conquise par la communication*, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1997, apud. Coman, Mihai, *quoted work*.

⁵⁵ Adrian Dinu Rachieru, *Media culture- a sub-culture?*, in „Convorbiri literare”, September 2003.

The consumption of cultural products is oriented towards “perishable” products that exhaust their posts quickly and must be quickly replaced by similar products. Achieving such a circuit involves widening the access to culture. Cultural values are simplified, reduced to accessible schemes. In the act of consumption, the intellectual side loses importance in favor of the affective dimension because of changes in cultural practices, which in this century are anchored decisively in practices of entertainment, and the purpose of cultural consumption is relaxing and not informing or educating.

*“Even stigmatized, the media culture, seen globally, dispenses from constraints. The dependence of comfort and consumption, the maintenance of consumerist reflexes by a penetrating large audience attracted a fierce wave of criticism, embracing even an apocalyptic vision. The widening of access was accompanied by the depletion of the symbolic content, because industrialization of culture, by equalizing and leveling the offer, fallen from being seen as goods, marked a pronounced un- spiritualization, requiring prevalence (supremacy) of the economic criteria. In other words, sub-cultural invasion, confiscating the interest of the average human established insidiously a brutal culture (E. Shils), devoid of reflexivity precisely by “simplifying contents”.*⁵⁶

CHAPTER II

SOCIETY, CIVILIZATION, CULTURE

⁵⁶ Adrian Dinu Rachieru, *Double talk and Media Discourse*, in „Convorbiri literare”, March 2003.

For the ancient Greeks and Romans, citizen's condition was the very condition of a civilized behaviour. Everything outside the Greco-Roman culture area was considered a barbaric world, having a lower axiological status.

The ethnographic point of view considered civilization as being its own determination of a country, society or era, respectively a set of characteristics of material, intellectual, artistic, and moral life of communities, peoples. From this perspective we can speak of Inca civilization, the Persians, the Scythians, etc.. Any invention, creation, human discovery becomes a fact of civilization if accepted and integrated in the way of being, of thinking and acting of the community.

The historical point of view reported civilization to progress; they consider it the cumulative process of information, energy, adaptive and creative capacity, optimization of social organization and human relationship with the environment, process that is materialized in increasing the internal and external order, to the detriment of lawlessness and human frustration. From this perspective, civilization is an advanced stage in human history, which includes the use of writing, the existence of cities, the modern organization of society, industrial techniques. A. Toffler divided the history of civilization into three waves: the first wave is the agricultural phase of human civilization, the second wave begins with the industrial phase, the third wave is the phase of computerization and cybernetics, a phase that emerges in the second half of the twentieth century.

Civilization is not only a culture phenomenon, but its only phenomenon: culture only appears in and through civilization and does not constitute by itself a direct and immediate object of experience or knowledge. We find here a report similar to that between energy and material: we sense the existence of a foreign culture, going from its civilization, without ever touching it directly. We do not even touch the appearance of culture (or culture as becoming), but what has already appeared: not a behaviour itself, but a behaviour fixed in its expression, objective document of the civilization where it was recorded; material vestige, written, visual, oral recording,

etc.. Any conduct or any unrecorded cultural model, whose means does not become a fact of civilization, is intangible.

The concept of culture is a synthetic concept that gathered various meanings and covered a wide area, stretched from everyday speech universe to the most elaborate intellectual products. If man is the measure of all things (Pythagoras), culture is, paraphrasing, human measure.

Culture at large, axiologically, represents *all values embodied in scientific and philosophical works, in literature and music, arts and crafts, customs and traditions, etc. that respond to perennial human aspirations such as self-revelation, thirst of absolute, contemplation and practice of the beauty, search for a life ideal, deciphering the unknown, etc.*

Culture, considered K. Popper, is the third reality, a reality that merges the external objective, empirical reality, with subjective, inner, spiritual reality.

II.1. THE PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

This is the most general perspective. In this plan of analysis, the most used referents are nature and society. Accordingly, the centre of gravity is the ratio between human-nature, culture-nature, underlining the specifics of human culture in relation to the natural environment. Then, in the extension of these analyses there are usually addressed the relations of culture with other components of social reality.

On a philosophical level, the use of the term culture in the modern period fulfils a rationalizing function. For Aristotle nature “is purpose and final cause”, so nature is in itself a movement, an activity directed towards a goal. In Aristotle's view, human sociability is therefore of natural, not cultural origin.

Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, shows that the original form of praxis is work. Thus, *the state of culture* will from now on identify with *the state of fact*, with what is artificial, created non-naturally. The natural state becomes more of a hypothetical

principle and not a temporal phase anterior to society, or culture. For modernity (on Hegel Ross's philosophical line) it is clearly imposed the idea that social organization expresses the very original cultural function, a function that occurs simultaneously with the productive one.

Modern philosophy reveals a dual function of culture: on the one hand, *the social function*, by which social organization is achieved, and on the other hand, the *productive, operational function*, expressing the specific note to human - creativity. Therefore, "we must consider culture as a originating social phenomenon", as a phenomenon of productive sociability.

Culture, considered K. Popper, is the third reality, a reality that merges external objective, empirical reality, with the subjective, inner, spiritual reality. For Blaga cultural creation is a figment of metaphorical nature and revealing insights of the human spirit, it responds to human existence in mystery and revelation, it reveals man as man, unlike the creation of civilization, which is a figment of security and comfort and could be produced, eventually even by an animal species endowed with good intelligence.

The constitutive moments of culture, as Romanian philosopher Alexandru Tănase emphasized, are knowledge, value, creation, and communication. Communication expresses a constitutive, final dimension of works of culture because through communication, culture achieves the information and training of man. Cultural values fulfill their formative and informative potential, through movement and integration in the ways of life, in the spiritual universe of thought and feelings of people. Through communication, realized diachronic and synchronic, culture lives, is perpetuated, and it increases. Communication covers both the qualitative aspect - critical, discerning assimilation, - of certain values, and the quantitative aspect, meaning social generalization cultural values.

II.2. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

The anthropologist- ethnologist point of view conceives culture as a conglomeration of facts and processes, which highlights the human nature of culture, but sins through disregarding the criterion of value and has a tendency to incorporate into culture, unselectively, the entire social heritage.

Having as main referent the human, the cultural personality, the anthropological approach “provides a broad acceptance to culture,” and anthropologist researchers “extend to extreme the notion of culture through the addition to acquired common data sets, such as beliefs, norms, values and representations, of *expressions* and *achievements* born from this mental system of acquired data. Thus, the concept of culture - in an anthropological sense - will include language, art, customs, and habits, and all the expressions and achievements obtained based on them (from everyday habits to social institutions).”

The tendency to consider culture in a very broad sense is already found in the first modern anthropologists. In this respect, E.B. Tylor, since his first major work, *Primitive Culture*, prints a force-idea to the anthropological research, namely that the progress of society and humans depends on the development of ideas or spirit.

In Tylor's conception, culture is a whole that comprises various human knowledge, attitudes and religious beliefs, customs, arts, law and all habits acquired by humans in a social setting. This vision of culture satisfied the anthropologists until about the year 1930, considers Leslie A. White. From that moment, more and more critics of Tylor's conception began to be made, observing that this view is not sufficiently precise and does not represent a definition in a rigorous sense. Then, a number of questions remain unanswered: What is, fundamentally, culture? What is the nature of culture? Etc.

In response to this position, another orientation that identifies culture in human behaviour domain emerged. Within this orientation, Radcliffe-Brown and Ralph

Linton will be particularly significant. For the latter, for example, in his *Study of man* (1936), culture is the sum of ideas, conditioned responses, and behaviour patterns that the members of a society acquire through training or imitation. In order to determine the content of a culture, emphasizes Linton, one must detach its elements going from the personality and behaviour of individuals that share it.

Towards this interpretation of culture, there have also been objections. First, as we have reminded, was the observation that animals learn different behaviours, and if we must talk also about *animal culture*, then we must seek new criteria and specific elements to define man. Secondly, it was raised the objection that, while culture is reduced essentially to learned behaviour and behaviour is the subject of study of psychology, non organic anthropology no longer has an object.

To speak only of characteristics and complexes of traits – points Bronislaw Malinowski – instead of speaking of institutions, organized groups, objects of use, beliefs and ideas (as they affect pragmatically the human behaviour) means we only talk about labeling various phenomena).

Or, continues Malinowski, “the only scientific method to understand culture is to study the “relations and phenomena which are determined by cultural forces acting in” a social setting. Assuming that human has to satisfy all the needs of his body, the father of anthropological functionalism notes that we must distinguish, on the one hand, the instrumental imperatives (arising from economic, regulatory, educational and political activities) and on the other hand, the integrative imperatives such as knowledge, religion and magic. In terms of artistic and recreational activities, they can be reported directly to certain physiological characteristics of the human body and can show what influence or dependency relations they maintain with concerted action modes, such as magic and religious beliefs.

This type of analysis, which allows “determining the relationship between cultural activities and human needs, whether basic or derived, will be called functional analysis. For function is nothing but the satisfaction of needs through an activity in which human beings act jointly, maneuvering objects, and consuming goods”. From

this perspective, Malinowski will define culture as “a whole which comprises tools and consumer goods, organic rights of different social groups, ideas and arts, crafts, beliefs and customs”. As you can see, this definition subsumes rather heterogeneous elements and the notion of culture tends to be confused with the social sphere in this case.

II.3. THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

“In sociology - appreciates A. Mucchielli - the term culture means a set of common habitudes of members of a group (more or less wide). These habitudes serve as permanent and unconscious references for the perception of things, to assess and intervene in guiding behaviours.”

The sociological perspective focuses on the relationship between culture and society, on the mechanisms by which society conditions cultural creations, considers that every culture is located in a social space and time, belongs to a social community, and has a specific dynamic.

Going from the hypostasis of human who speaks, writes, telecommunicates, Marshall McLuhan considers that in time three types of culture have developed. An *oral culture*: mythological and aphoristic, predominantly auditory, specific to closed societies, a *visual culture*, that of printing (Gutenberg Galaxy) associated with the psychological and gnoseological fragmentation, as well as with the ethical individualism. It was Gutenberg who led to the democratization of knowledge and cultural property but imposed on all levels a concept of homogeneity, has inaugurated the individual isolation and the indifference to the fate of others, weakened memory and decreased the importance of aphoristic education. The *audiovisual culture* (Marconi Galaxy), of electronic era technologies that promise to restore a harmonious balance between senses, which would return us to a higher level, to oral, audio

communication, where events are simultaneous and consciousness is global (Gutenberg Galaxy, Ed Policy, 1975).

Romanian sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, distinguishes three acceptations of the idea of culture. The first is the objective culture, seen as a system of cultural goods that form the style of an era: a code of laws, a song, a scientific discovery. The second is the institutional culture promoted by the state, church, and customs, and the third is the personal culture referring to individual's attitudes toward culture, his cultural framing of a social time and then his release from this area through creation of new values (D. Gusti, Selected Pages, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing, 1965).

A human group develops any culture concretely and historically given that the group complies with certain values for some time. "Culture - stresses Andrei P. - cannot conceive itself and cannot be explained without the *idea of value*, which is something essential for it..." The Romanian sociologist continues: "culture is thus a synthetic process of creation, transformation of reality under the impulses of higher values, in which the individual collaborates with the society."

In addition to the clear emphasizing that sociology must keep in mind that values are constitutive elements of culture, in the ideas above we find the implicit aspect, according to which values are not reduced to culture, but cover a wide area (that of the social). They transcend the culture area and fulfill, in addition to the constitutive function, the regulatory function.

II.4. THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL CULTURE. FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

Political culture represents a part of culture in general. To define the concept of political culture is necessary to define first the concept of culture. Culture, in the broadest sense of the term, means all material and spiritual values created by humankind in the social-historical practice process of conscious transformation of their natural and social environment, the human becoming, and continuous

improvement of human. As society, as a global social system, is made up of national subsystems, which taken separately, are themselves independent systems and culture manifests itself as a product of a people, of a nation. The Culture of a people is therefore all the material and spiritual values created by it in the socio-historical practice process, in the concrete conditions in which it develops.

More broadly, the culture of a people includes both material culture (all the material values and the techniques necessary to produce them) and the spiritual culture (the creations of science, literature, education, morality, and so on). It results, therefore, that culture directly indicates the degree of knowledge and creativity of a people at a given time, with a national as well as universal character. An authentic national culture has a great universal value through its contribution to human knowledge and creation.

Political culture is a part of culture in general, but it distinguishes itself by its specificity, by its characteristic features and functions.

Political culture can be defined as the totality of knowledge, implicitly and explicitly political, which is related to the organization and the political leadership of the society in accordance with the aspirations of the historical progress. So political culture indicates the degree of knowledge and creativity in planning and political leadership of a society and it constitutes an essential condition for an effective politic, important for both political society and civil society, for governors and the governed.

The political society (state institutions, political parties, etc.) cannot fulfill its mission to better organize and manage the affairs of the community without a sound political culture, and the civil society is not able to choose the best leaders and to make them serve interests properly, without a minimum of elements of political culture. Because historical experience has shown that the organization and democratic governance of society is a condition of historical progress, between political culture and democracy there is a direct relationship. The higher the degree of culture of a people is, the more certain the promotion of democratic politics is. And vice versa.

The same historical experience shows that democratic regimes have been conducted in human communities with a high degree of political culture and the dictatorial regimes have emerged, usually, if we exclude the external factors, in communities with a low political culture.

The importance of political culture for the organization and political leadership of the society has led many political scientists from different periods, to prepare studies on the concept, role and functions of political culture.

Although the term political culture is of recent date, first used in 1956 by North American political scientist Gabriel Almond in a work on politics system, concerns for the study of political culture are found since antiquity.

When Aristotle and Plato emphasized that political ideas and opinions rule the world, when the Enlightenment showed that reason, education, and morality are based on political action, they did nothing but to highlight the elements of political culture, emphasizing their importance to the organization and the political leadership of society.

Studies on political culture are found in the period after the World War II, developed by political scientists such as Gabriel Almond (USA), A. Lancelot, J. Schmeil (France), F. Burlaski (Russia), M. Markiewicz (Poland), etc.

We find valuable the political studies made by J. Schmeil. In his work “Political culture” of the “Treaty of Political Science,” published in France in 1985, he shows that more appropriate would be to use the plural “political cultures”, because there would not exist, in the opinion of the author quoted, a unique political culture, but many cultures that are based on the attitude towards the political regime.⁵⁷

Based on the three dimensions of culture established by Talcott Parsons in the work “The Social System”, Almond and Verba highlight three dimensions of political culture that make it a set of cultural traits relevant for the analysis of political phenomena rather than a set of attitudes and orientations of individuals towards a political system. This fact makes it difficult to distinguish it from the social culture in

⁵⁷ C. Vâlsan, *Politology*, Economic Publishing, Bucharest, 1997, p. 183-186.

general, given that social culture is defined as a system of attitudes and orientations of individuals toward a particular social system. The three dimensions are:

The cognitive dimension: Each individual, regardless of his training or status, has a set of knowledge more or less structured, more or less rigorous about political systems and phenomena. Daily events put him in direct contact with the political reality and the pressure of the environment and the information bombardment forces him somewhat to become aware of this reality.

The affective dimension: includes the emotional side of political or social values, the attitude of attachment, rejection or refusal towards political phenomena or institutions. It plays an important role in shaping attitudes. Political knowledge or information are received easier when there is a customization of political relations, i.e. when they come from a relative, a friend, a leader who raises personal admiration, regardless of the policy undertaken.⁵⁸

The appreciative dimension refers to value judgments, to opinions on the system and political phenomenon.

There is an interdependence between these dimensions, as the assessment of the political system that cannot be done without political knowledge, and these in turn generate value judgments which together lead to an attitude of participation or nonparticipation in politics. Usually political culture leads from participation in the political life, to influencing political action. From here results the conclusion that, in general, political culture is largely participatory.

Because political culture plays an important role for both the political society and the civil society, some political scientists accredit, for the civil society, the idea of a civic culture. Obviously, in this sense, one can speak of a civic culture that is defined primarily by citizens' reporting to the democratic values and hence their participation in actions to support democracy. But in the end, the civic culture is in fact a form of political culture.

⁵⁸ V. Măgureanu, *Studies of Political Sociology*, Albatros Publishing, Bucharest, 1997, p. 326-327.

Depending on the shapes of political culture (cognitive, affective, and appreciative), there occur several moods of the population of a country in relation to policy: agreement, apathy, and alienation. The agreement requires the presence of three dimensions: knowledge, affectivity, and evaluation. Apathy does not exclude the existence of political knowledge, but on an affective and appreciative level, indifference manifests. Political detachment implies some interest, but no commitment. Alienation also implies the existence of political knowledge and appreciative elements, but is characterized by hostility towards the political system. The more numerous the apathy and alienation in society are, the more fragile the stability of the political system is.

In order to achieve a valuable political culture, which manifests fully its cognitive, emotional, and appreciative dimensions, we need a democratic climate. In this climate, there should be, on the one hand, freedom of thought, expression, free flow of information, free access to training and information, and on the other hand, a responsibility towards the veracity of information and an appropriate, democratic behaviour in society of all citizens, both the government and the governed.

Certain specific features characterize political culture, and through them, it distinguishes itself from the rest of culture.

Thus, political culture differs primarily in that it is based on a broad background of knowledge, which regards all fields of activity and which are capitalized by political culture. A genuine political culture can not ignore the knowledge of economic, social, moral, national and world history, etc. Knowledge in these areas is necessary in the formation of political culture both for the government and for the governed. For the government this is seen as a condition sine qua non, because the development of appropriate policy programs of the society organization and management involves vast knowledge in all fields. For governments the same requirements of general knowledge are imposed, to help them understand the political phenomena and to adopt a correct attitude towards it. We can say that between cultures, taken generally,

and political culture, there is a direct relationship in the sense that a genuine political culture can only exist based on a vast general culture.

Another feature of the political culture refers to the specific of political values and norms. If we assume that value represents the embodiment of some goals, projects, desires, in a word, of ideals of political action of organization and management of the society in accordance with the requirements of historical progress, then the political values represent a relationship between reality and people's ideals of progress. Therefore, political culture includes values that require actions to promote historical progress and target, paraphrasing Aristotle, "the general welfare of society." Going from this characteristic feature of culture, political values refer to the ideals of freedom of all people and nations, to the democratic organization of society, to thought and free expression, to justice and social equity and everyone's wishes for better. It manifests as conscious social acts, embodied in ideals that characterize a certain system of values, and general human values common to society in its historical evolution. Any political system creates certain criteria of appreciating the political value, based on which leads his activity of promoting them. Closely related to political values are the political norms that derive from the criteria for assessing political values.

The political norm expresses the activity rules, a fixed pattern of behaviour established by tradition or by law, regarding the political manifestations of individuals, organizations, and political power regarding social life.

Within each society, a set of specific rules develops, which governs relations between citizens, between social groups and between these and the political power. In a well-articulated political system, political norms find expression in the adoption of a fundamental law, in the Constitution, which is the main legal framework within which the citizens of that country operate. Thus, the political value, in order to be efficacious, must be embodied in laws and other rules of social conduct.

To build a proper regulatory framework, of great importance is the development of political programs of parties in which should be included both the progress of society requirements and people's aspirations for better.

Another feature of the political culture is that it is based on means and specific institutions and on means and characteristic institutions of the whole society.

Within institutions and specific means, there are power, political parties, political organizations, some media etc. Also, the rest of institutions and training and general information resources contribute to the formation of political culture. It can therefore be said that of all forms of culture, the political one benefits from the most organized and institutionalized framework.

Another feature characteristic to political culture is that it manifests itself mainly in the form of political ideologies. Political ideology is a relatively structured set of values and political ideas, with a character of group, class, and which express their interests and political goals.

Ideology, as a set of ideas and values with a class character, is developed by theorists of the social group or political party, and is carried in doctrines and political programs, aimed at attracting people to the values, ideas, and norms proclaimed. Although the values, ideas, political convictions are specific to a particular group, they are usually presented as being universal, in order to attract more followers. Therefore, political ideology is a form of the political culture with a coherent and partisan character, but usually less realistic and global. For the government, political culture must be endorsed in ideology, doctrines, and programs to provide as many options for organizing and social management. The more an ideology incorporates the interests and aspirations of progress of the citizens, the more realistic and effective it is. If we should assess the political culture of government, of political parties, we cannot reproach them anything, except the fact that it did not crystallize sufficiently in clear ideology, in concrete political doctrines concerning the organization and management of society. The political culture fulfils its role in

society by certain functions of a general nature regarding the entire society, but also specific for the governors or governed.

As general functions, we mention the information function, the axiological function, and the normative function.

The informational function is the way of transmitting to society members, information about the political system, political actions, values, and political norms. This function contributes to the formation of a fund of political knowledge and hence the knowledge of the political organization of society, the ties between rulers and ruled, between the government and individuals, between state and society, the criteria by which power appreciates state politics. Through this way of information and knowledge, it is ensured an appropriate behaviour from both the public and the government. In a democratic political system, the informational function of culture is performed in both directions, from governors to governed, and vice versa. In this way, the government informs on the decisions taken, gives suggestions, or directs some action. In turn, the governed express their options on the legitimacy of political decisions and political acts and express their political attitudes and behaviour towards power.

The axiological function refers to how to appreciate the value of political phenomena and the practical ways of establishing a system of values and the reporting to practical reality. Through this function there are achieved certain beliefs of people towards the political values, which can be attachment or rejection of these values. Beliefs, in their turn, generate political attitudes, which are ways of reporting citizens to political phenomena that they appreciate in a certain way.

The normative function of the political culture regards the way in which the system of values is converted into norms and rules designed to give stability to society and to ensure the functionality of the social system. In developing norms and rules of behaviour, any political culture tends toward consensus, which is rarely achieved, because there are often situations when some members of society reject some of the rules and regulations developed by the political power. For social stability, is

necessary the acceptance by all members of a society of a sufficient number of rules and regulations to ensure that, even if some members of society do not fancy them. In a society where there is a sound political culture, all citizens respect the political norms and rules, whether they express the will of the majority, even if some disagree with them. In a democratic society with a high level of political culture, it is allowed the contesting of certain values and political rules, which does not automatically mean their violation.

As specific functions for the governors, the political culture includes the development of some political programs appropriate to the democratic development of society and the ensuring of their transposition into practice. For citizens, the forming of a behaviour of compliance of political rules, laws of the country and change by democratic means of those who are considered that do not meet the needs of progress. In conclusion, the political culture fulfils an important role in organizing and democratic governance of society, in ensuring norms and rules of living in accordance with the requirements of social development on the line of historical progress. The role of political culture is characterized mainly by its conversion into political action.⁵⁹

II.5. MEDIA CULTURE

II.5.1. History and Terminological Clarifications

Media culture is a relatively recent historical phenomenon that in most capitalist states is a form of culture with a strong commercial character, produced for profit and disseminated in the form of commodities. The commercialization and consumerism of the media culture has many important consequences. First, the production for profit makes those who control this industry make products that will be popular, will be sold, requiring the need to shock, to break conventions. Media culture largely promotes the interests of the class that controls the major media conglomerates thus

⁵⁹ C. Vâlsan, *quoted work*, p.186-192.

giving voice to conflicting positions between competing groups. Media culture is in a sense the dominant culture; it replaced the forms of the elevated culture as center of cultural attention and the impact on a large number of people.⁶⁰

In 1947, Th. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, launched the term “cultural industry” to refer to all the techniques of industrial production and reproduction of cultural works, after initially in early versions of the text, had used the term “mass culture”. Cultural industry triggers a process of simplification of the major culture to make it accessible to semi-educated masses and, in order to produce more and cheaper, companies that invest in “mass” culture introduce the standardization of production.⁶¹

According to Bernard Miege⁶² all consumer goods may be reduced to two major types of products: cultural and informational. The first is distinguished by the randomness of the value in use (the art object does not escape the conditioning of taste and fashion, factors involving variations and unexpected fluctuations) and by limited possibilities of production and serialization (every community has a particular cultural code and does not accept, understand, consume goods produced by successful recipes from other companies). Information assets are able to be easily copied, reproduced, interchangeable, and the price that they are purchased with, may not be related to the value of usage.

Dinu Rachieru raises in “Literary Conversations” the question “Media culture - a subculture?” saying: *“Media culture, abdicating from the standards of high culture, seems to be a one-way traffic, forcing a passive absorption, encouraging selfishness and conformity on the background of the informational noise of the age. Media “captivity”, turning us into consumers (amorphous mass), reduces the so-called role of negotiators, although sub-cultural responses (activities, styles, rituals), embracing even a spectacular look inside the mother- culture provoke conflicting relations in awarding cultural space (through the imposition of sub- cultural identities). [...]”*

⁶⁰ Kellner, Douglas, *Media culture*, European Institute, Iași, 2001, p. 20-100.

⁶¹ Coman, Mihai, *Introduction to media system*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, p. 55-69.

⁶² Miege, Bernard, *La société conquise par la communication*, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1997, apud Coman, Mihai, op.cit.

*Without the risk of being mistaken, we can say, as a conclusion, that these symbolic responses reinforce an ancient and alarming finding: media culture remains a medium culture, a sub-culture, in fact, the real mass culture of our time. It's a time, let's not forget, that universalizes it in the apocalypse of massification through industrialization of the cultural product and widespread of the consumption (by abundance and accessibility)."*⁶³

Gilles Lipovetsky argues that in today's world "mass culture is a consumer culture, made entirely for immediate pleasure." As the cultural object and pleasure are consumed the act of consumption, both the product and the interest for them must constantly be refreshed, thus creating waves of "trends".

The consumption of cultural products is oriented towards "perishable" products that exhaust their posts quickly and must be quickly replaced by similar products. Achieving such a circuit involves widening the access to culture. Cultural values are simplified, reduced to accessible schemes. In the act of consumption, the intellectual side loses importance in favor of affective dimension because of changes in cultural practices, which in this century are anchored decisively in practices of entertainment, and the purpose of cultural consumption is relaxing and not informing or educating.

*"Even stigmatized, the media culture, seen globally, dispenses from constraints. The dependence of comfort and consumption, the maintenance of consumerist reflexes by a penetrating large audience attracted a fierce wave of criticism, embracing even an apocalyptic vision. The widening of access was accompanied by the depletion of the symbolic content, because of the industrialization of culture, by equalizing and leveling the offer, fallen from being seen as goods, marked a pronounced inspiritualization, requiring prevalence (supremacy) of the economic criteria. In other words, sub- cultural invasion, confiscating the interest of the average human established insidiously a brutal culture (E. Shils), devoid of reflexivity precisely by "simplifying contents".*⁶⁴

⁶³ Rachieru, Adrian Dinu, *Media culture- a sub- culture?*, in „Convorbiri literare”, September 2003.

⁶⁴ Rachieru, Adrian Dinu, *Double talk and media discourse?*, in „Convorbiri literare”, March 2003.

II.5.2. Cultural Studies

The Frankfurt School

Studies on mass culture were powerfully influenced by the Frankfurt School, which inaugurated critical studies of mass communication and postmodernism, this representing a shift of paradigm in cultural theories.

Strongly influenced by Marxism and discovering in psychoanalysis the key to understand many phenomena apparently irrational at the time, the intellectuals of Frankfurt School will strive to reconcile the two concepts, towards a merger of these two theoretical universes hitherto seen as incompatible. Thus it emerges the „*critical theory of society*” represented at first through the philosophical and sociological work written by Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno and later through the Neo-Freudian Revisionism, represented by Erich Fromm as main figure.

Heir of this type of criticism, the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, continues the work of the members of the Frankfurt School, this representing the second phase of the Critical Theory. Although he was not contemporaneous with any of this institute for philosophical research's members, Habermas can be counted among them, as his works continue the critical theory they approached, studying much more the marxist theory.⁶⁵

A debate over the works of Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas regarding the new means of cultural production and transmission and implicitly regarding the necessary technique innovations is necessary as they marked a major turning point in the History of the Frankfurt School. After 1960, Habermas' influence developed while Marcuse's declined, and the Critical Theory took a utopian position. But, recently there was noticed a renaissance of the radical criticism of technology in an encouraging movement under the influence of M. Foucault and of constructivism.

⁶⁵ De Fleur Melvin, Ball-Rokeach, *Theories of Mass Communication*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1999.

While many of Habermas' arguments are still persuasive, his defensive over modernity seems to admit more and more the claims of the autonomous technology. The criticism of the technology characterized by the primary studies developed by the Institute for Social Research, especially those of its main members, Adorno and Horkheimer, who, in the middle '40s coined the term of „cultural industry”, through which they set in a great manner the thesis of the „culture bankruptcy”, its decay to the status of merchandise. In the „*Dialectic of Enlightenment*” (1972) they argue that this instrument is a means of domination, and if this is a true argument, then technology is not neutral either and its mere use implies taking a significant attitude⁶⁶. Frequently, the work „*One-Dimensional Man*” by Herbert Marcuse was compared to „*Dialectic of Enlightenment*” by Adorno and Horkheimer, but having a less pessimistic tendency than of the last two. Putting aside the more confident perspective, Marcuse seems influenced by Heidegger, although he did not admit this influence, probably due to the powerful political disagreement existing between them⁶⁷. In Heidegger's terms, Marcuse reveals a new possibility of the existence from the perspective of a revolutionary transformation of the practice that could lead to the making of a new science and technology basically different, which could put us in harmony with nature and not in opposition to it. Thus, nature is considered to be a comprehended subject through which the human being can attain its objectives. But, Habermas was not convinced by this theory, and in his work „*Technology and Science as Ideology*” he denounces the hidden hopes of a whole generation of social thinkers (Benjamin, Adorno, Bloch) whose implicit ideal was the restoration of the harmony of man and nature and attacks the idea of a new science and technology which is just a romantic myth. Of course Habermas would not deny that technological development is influenced by social demands, but that is quite different from the notion that there are a variety of technical rationalities, as Marcuse believes. Technology, in short, will always be a non-social, objectivating relation to nature,

⁶⁶ Drăgan, Ioan, *Paradigms of mass communication*, Publishing House and Press ”Șansa” SRL, Bucharest, 1996.

⁶⁷ Mattelart, Armand: Mattelart, Michele, *The history of communication theories*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2001.

oriented toward success and control. Marcuse would argue, on the contrary, that the very essence of technology is at stake in the reform of the modern industrial system.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism, as a cultural paradigm, is a system that manages to legitimize culture (high or mass culture) even when it undermines it, and in the same time to auto-legitimize. In recent years arguments emerged in favour of the postmodern element in cultural studies.

René Huyghe in *The Power of the Image*⁶⁸, starts from the observation that we live in a period of image haunting vogue, of visual offensive (as cinema, television, pictures and graphics, sculpture, posters, photos, ads, etc.) and that the share of visuality on the coordinates of the spirit (post-) modern has increased, becoming more and more sensitive to the perception of forms. Contemporary civilization is less and less one of the book, but more and more that of an image. “<Mass-media> may prove to be a false name because its effect is that it shows how society itself is an illusion and, along with it, traditional political strategies⁶⁹.” In fact, one of the important issues for postmodernism is that, although one lives in a culture of proliferating images, the future has no image; and that as a consequence of the loss of confidence in the ideal of the progress and rapid technological change.

Either from the perspective of Marshall McLuhan who watched fascinated the increasingly brutal rule of the Gutenberg galaxy by the Marconi galaxy, or from that of Umberto Eco from *War of perjury* that presents the inflation (“apocalyptic”) of symbols and symptoms, it is undeniable the ubiquitous of the extensions of man in the “cool media” (photographic images, video, television, radio) to replace “hot media” (print).

Image civilization has penetrated all cultural events and daily praxis, and in this new culture everything is an orchestration towards saturation of images. Tragic conclusion of many scholars, not just from the field of literary theory and media, but also from

⁶⁸ Huyghe, René, *The Power of the Image*, Publishing House. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1971, p. 151.

⁶⁹ Lyon, David, *Postmodernism*, D.U. Style Publisher, Bucharest, 1998, p. 88.

imagology, psychology, etc., this proliferation of images involves the risk of the paralysis of human choice, of actively response, of interpretation, precipitating the detrimental tendency to passivity.

Contemporary world falls under the sign of the image that has come to dominate various social practices such as advertising, propaganda, media. A good motivation of the exponential growth of information would be that the transmission of knowledge uses iconic encoding (chart, table, diagram, graph etc.) – more capable to make storage data economical, synthetic, legible. As newspapers, magazines, radio and television provide individuals increasingly more images of a world becoming more and more complex and whose experience is not done directly, they gain power not only to report facts, but also to create them.

Another hypothesis formulated was that visual images do not provide the same kind of truth as words, that images occur at the surface, that experience is immediate and is not to be discovered through a deep analysis of images, that the significance of visual images is less complex being deprived of the multitude of meanings characteristic to separate words and the ironic ambivalence that is established between words.

“Now the image precedes the reality it is supposed to represent. Or to put it in another way, reality has become a pale reflection of the image. This reversal is evident in politics, in the world of media and artistic culture [...].

Real and imaginary have become almost indistinguishable, which lead to a deep crisis in the contemporary arts. Postmodern writings exploit this conventional fracturing relationship between fiction and reality. The same thing happens in film and fine art. Art became anti-art, and the difference between elite culture and popular culture is almost imperceptible. The hallowed idea of artistic image as an actually genuine original image is denoted by media image as technological

reproduction. Art images serve more and more as parodies of commercial images, while commercial images serve as parodies of art image. A significant reversal.”⁷⁰

Culture, long regarded as determined, directly or indirectly, as a mode of production, is now interpreted as a creative factor of reality and a resistant constituent of power. For many theorists, the sign (term which includes all forms of representation) is the major element of the contemporary world and allows a reassessment of culture and, especially, of the origin and history of specific representations. Umberto Eco in *Framework* ⁷¹, starting from the idea that instead of referring to the real world, the media product relates to other images, other narratives, argues that there has been a change of the substance of television, that *paleo-television* differs substantially from *neo-television* that, “speaks increasingly less about the surrounding world” and uses nowadays the entire suite of fictional strategies specific to literature.

However the idea that reality is broken down in images is common in the postmodernist discourse and the sense of fragmentation and uncertainty perceived today in art, architecture, music and videos, create a new cultural collage, a *mélange* of styles and products that crash in an “encyclopedic confusion”.

One of the laws of consumerism of the third millennium is that society is no longer dominated and led by heads of state or military but by those who manage the image, by communicators (*faiseurs de mots, faiseurs d'images*) because no product (actual goods/ physical person) will not sell without a mythologized speech, without a brand image, sometimes more important than the political act itself, or product quality. Marketability is obtained through the inculcation of symbols, which adds irrational components of the Cartesian cogito's type, the euphoric, utopian, anachronistic size - compulsion of imagination and meditation, through which the affective merges with the persuasion and with the information. Images fulfill other functions as well: production and sale of images of permanence and power requires a sophisticated

⁷⁰ Constantinescu, Mihaela, *Postmodernism: entertainment culture*, Enciclopedica Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 164.

⁷¹ Constantinescu, Mihaela, *op.cit.*

technique; in addition the image becomes extremely important in competitions. The media tends to produce models of pseudo-existence for a collaborative public.

Mark C. Taylor and E. Saarinen (1994)⁷² coin the term *simcult*, simulated culture, to define the condition of the contemporary culture. *Simcult* allows that the whole world of knowledge converts into a free trade field. “*The individual subject is no longer regarded as creator and communicator of his own image. Like any other commodity in mass communication society, postmodern image itself has become an object of consumption, subject to the laws of market economy [...]. In many postmodern works the distinction between artistic image and the goods image has disappeared.*”⁷³— Mihaela Constantinescu.

Postmodernism brings doubt concerning the authenticity of aesthetics. Claude Karnoouh, in his essay ‘*Is there morality in postmodern politics?*’ notes that current trend compensates blurring aesthetics with a commercial surrogate: fashion. “*So far, not only aesthetic values were those that gave a work of art its value, but something about the craft, that remains, from the Greeks, in the Techné field. Now the quality of the work itself is not given even by aesthetic standards, but by those who decide what is new and valuable, more precisely, by the great art dealers, auction companies experts and directors of major museums of contemporary art [...]. More or less, art is identified with fashion.*”⁷⁴

Aesthetic and/or kitsch

The “kitsch” term, as the concept which designates it, is a very recent one – started being used in the '60s-'70s of the last century, in the jargon of painters and art dealers in Munich which manufactured and put on sale, due to pecuniary needs and reasons, the first prototypes of kitsch painting, the term being used to describe cheaper artistic production. At the time when the kitsch art emerged, in the nineteenth century, the rupture of the epistemic - in representation – does not have an aesthetic motivation

⁷² According to Mihaela Constantinescu.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 165.

⁷⁴ Karnoouh, Claude, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

and is not a rebellious attitude. The motivation is fundamentally social and denounces the gap between high art (innovative) and aesthetic preferences (conservative, conformist) of a category of “consumers” that enhances what the Renaissance called “social orders” on the art market. In this era appears the ferment of the dissolution of academicism, not in postmodernism.

However, only in the first decades of the twentieth century kitsch became an international term, strongly pejorative and, therefore, with subjective range of uses. Abraham Moles in *Psychology of Kitsch* makes one of the first lucid analysis of the phenomenon, starting from its history: *“kitsch is a very popular German word used mainly in the south; in the modern sense, it appears in Munich in 1860: kitschen <to do something superficially> and a special sense <to transform old furniture>; it is a verb from the informal language; verkitschen means <to degrade, to cripple, to falsify>, so selling to someone something else instead of what he/she asked: therefore, it is about, a underlying ethics thinking, of denying authenticity⁷⁵.”*

Whatever are the types of contexts in which it occurs, the kitsch always involves the notion of *aesthetic inadequacy*. It appears as the expression of a perverted aesthetic taste. In everyday language the term is associated with the works belonging to the fine arts, especially painting. But it is not only “pseudo-art” or “surrogate-art”, as it can occur in many other situations that have nothing to do with art⁷⁶.

The explosion of the kitsch phenomenon occurs undoubtedly, in modernity. It is tied to a particular type of culture - popular culture, and enjoys independent recognition, being only a term of the critical system within the new culture.

Most early definitions are socializing definitions of kitsch, in which recurring items occur: art as recreation and entertainment, accessibility, quick and predictable effects “commercial spirit” of writers, readers’ psychological need to escape the monotony of everyday life.

⁷⁵ Moles, Abraham, *Kitsch Psychology – the art of happiness*, translated by Marina Rădulescu, Meridiane Publishing House, collection “Currents and synthesis”, Bucharest, 1980, p. 5-6.

⁷⁶ www.georgepruteanu.ro

Since 1941, Adorno describes the need for fun or “entertainment” of the masses, as being, at the same time, a result of the existing mode of production (capitalism) and one of the most characteristic products. T.W. Adorno emphasizes the essentially modern character of kitsch, which “results from the desperate need to escape the uniformity of abstract things through a kind of futile and autocratic promise of happiness (<promesse du bonheur>)”. He defines the phenomenon of kitsch as being “that structure of invariants that the philosophical lie assigns to its solemn projects. [...]»

He defamed the kitsch *with an enthusiasm that expresses [...] the bad conscience of high culture – a high culture which suspects that under domination it is nothing of the sort, and which is reminded by kitsch of its own mischief. Today, since the consciousness of the rulers is beginning to converge with the total tendency of society, the tension between culture and kitsch is falling apart. Culture no longer drags its despised opponent behind it powerlessly, but takes it under direction*⁷⁷. ”

Reformulating in a cultural context the famous theory of Marx, according to which the mode of production creates not only specific goods but also the need of those specific goods, he argues that mass culture, to the extent that it is kitsch - primarily answers to the psychological needs of the middle class, which it tries to generalize for the whole society, in an informatized world very similar to that of “planetary village” of Marshall McLuhan.

However, it was necessary a first distinction between genuine art and mass culture – and this is stated also by one of the representatives of the Frankfurt School Social and Cultural Criticism, Leo Lowenthal, who in *Literature Popular Culture and Society* – published in 1961 summarizes both his personal position and the cultural philosophy of the Frankfurt School, and states that “to the extent that there is any legitimacy of the concept of reductionism, it applies, indeed, to popular culture. [...] In terms of classical Marxism, popular culture is indeed ideology. [...] If one replaces popular culture with kitsch, the distinction becomes more compelling.”

⁷⁷ Adorno, Theodor, *Minima Moravia*, Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999.

One of the founding myths of modernity is the myth of progress, based on a secular concept of linear and irreversible time.

“The great discovery on which the psychological kitsch is based is that almost anything related directly or indirectly to artistic culture can be immediately transformed into an object for <consumption>, like any other ordinary metaphor [...]. Uniqueness and even reality became anachronistic qualities that not only are no longer fashionable, but they illustrate a defender of the <cultural consumption> (and supporter of respectable kitsch and bourgeois) called <the law of art inefficiency>”⁷⁸.

In terms of predictability, kitsch is an art form with well-established norms, with predictable public and foreseeable effects as well as expected rewards. Cărtărescu Mircea in his book *The Romanian Postmodernism* writes, “the rehabilitation of kitsch through its humanization is only possible in a postmodern perspective, because, if romance, avant-garde and surrealism used the kitsch, they did it for its effects of grotesque, absurd, and involuntary expressiveness. The kitsch was always, in these poetics, the other, the aesthetic monster. In the postmodern experience, the kitsch is the new *lingua franca* of a world dominated by design, advertising, show-business, institutions which dissolve to recreate forever⁷⁹.

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Cultural studies have neglected so far the development of strategies and practices of media intervention and production of alternative mass communication means and how they can be transformed and used as tools of education and social progress.

⁷⁸Malfred Frank, Gunter Fiegel, Aurel Codoban, Călinescu, Matei, *Postmodernism - philosophical approaches*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 208.

⁷⁹ Cărtărescu, Mircea, *Romanian Postmodernism*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 422.

It should also be established a democratic media policy to serve the interests of the people and not the elites formed from corporates, so the current cultural studies should consider how media and culture can be transformed into instruments of social change.

In contemporary axiology (Axios = value; logos = theory, knowledge) is increasingly accepted the concept that value creation is considered as an essential coordinate of human action, more like a human dimension, meaning that in addition to other defining attributes such as homo Faber (being producing tools) or homo cogitans (connoisseur being), man has also got that of homo aestimans (capitalizing being).

Human reality meaning the reality that exists only for humans - is born not only from practical reports and cognitive reports, but also from an infinite amount of assessments. Consequently, the acquiring of existence by the human consciousness is achieved in two ways possibly generating two fundamental attitudes, not contrary, but rather complementary namely a cognitive attitude and a capitalizing attitude.

- In the first attitude - the cognitive one- to the existence, the subject (man) formulates a discursive approach. The result of this attitude is the rational knowledge act, which accompanies the practical investigation of the real world. In this approach, consciousness adds nothing to the world, but only reveals the structures of existence. This approach assumes that the act of knowledge is rigorous approximately neutral, at least because the discursive approach of conscience, proceeding systematically and step by step, gives us at some point a picture as precise as possible about the objective world.

From the objective picture of the world (the scientific knowledge) does not arise - directly - any call to action or to a pre-determined behaviour. The tools of any cognitive approach are concepts. Their meanings are cognitive, i.e. they have those components of meaning that are relevant to determining the truth. The result of the effort of organizing and structuring experience with the help of concepts is a global and unifying picture of reality.

- In the plan of the second attitude - the capitalizing one - occurs the distinguishing of capitalizing characteristics of the world, which accompanies the cognitive reporting to reality, (but is not mistaken with it). In his daily work, the man has an attitude that implies an appreciation of things and situations. In this (process) capitalizing attitude humans express themselves directly, immediately, establishing meanings and giving preferential status to objects and situations.

Capitalization is essentially a comparing and judgment operation -is an act of conscience of preferential reporting to object, but is not detached from the other acts of consciousness. This (capitalization) approach has a different function from the first act (the cognitive one), following the formation of a unified attitude towards the social and natural reality. Its implementation requires the value to be conceived as a structure of subjectivity, through which the acts of experience (knowledge and appreciation) systematize, centered on human needs and aspirations.

If values are connected with consciousness, the concepts are isolated from consciousness. This is why the abstractions world can be indifferent, while the world of values is not indifferent.

The two ways of relating to reality - cognitive and capitalizing - although different, cannot be separated, they are weaving, and any act of intellectual knowledge assumes an appreciation, a valuation. This is because, in our view, the front of reality man never has a purely passive recording attitude; he tries to give a human sense to reality. Therefore, transforming reality into a human world necessarily involves a rupture of indifference from the surrounding things, an assessment and ranking of them according to the needs of people, they (things) are not neutral, but acquire certain significance for man through their continuous reporting to the needs, desires, and aspirations of people.

Following the first attitude (the cognitive one), people make judgments of existence, like “Outside the weather is beautiful”, “The earth revolves around the sun”. Following the second attitude, people make value judgments that include, besides

existence, the appreciation of the quality and utility of the thing, like “Fruits are good because they help to preserve health” or “Preparing students in psychology at the university is of a high intellectual level”.

We see that value judgments are set up through an act of valuing. Valuing is the act of treasuring, appreciation of the product of knowledge and human creation. In the act of valuing, the human reports everything he acquires cognitively to his human necessities. The act of valuing takes place only in the collective consciousness (social) level and is carried out by virtue of objective criteria that are not developed by individual, but are historically and socially conditioned.

In this perspective, G. Lukacs emphasized that “Options are oriented with the help of values, which do not represent simple results, summaries etc. of subjective, individual values, but rather decide (due to the subjectivity they have in the social existence) on the truth or optional falsity based on value, communities”.

Therefore, value is a result of knowledge and creation, of valuing. Because it is good to know that not everything man creates is a value, not every product of human activity is valuable. It becomes value that human product which through its qualities and utility acquires the appreciation of the collective consciousness of community. In this sense, every community and every age has its own system of values.

- Regarding the definition of value:

To proceed to define the value some preliminary details are required:

- Values (as already noted) are concepts (no matter how many judgements someone would make, he/she cannot explain he/she likes Verdi’s music or Brâncuși’s sculpture);
- Values are not things, rather they are a world apart from the world of things, a world of meanings that doubles that of physical objects. Values can not be confused with their material bearers (the marble of a statue has no value, not even the sculpture carved into it but only its mark);

- Values are not psychic, even if they are not closely related to human desires. That the values are desired, loved, willful, they are experienced (sometimes dramatic, in the sense that one struggles, dies for them) does not mean that are exclusively tied to the experience of the individual;
- Values are not ideal objects (such as models from theoretical physics).

From the above results what values are not. That is why it is necessary to show what values are.

- For people, values are qualities which are acquired by the elements of reality (objects, processes, actions) through the eyes of attitudes (political, legal, moral, aesthetic, religious) of a human community (social class, nation).

In other words, values express the appreciation given by a human community to some objects, processes, actions by virtue of their intrinsic quality, but also their ability to meet the needs, aspirations, ideals of that community. This is because, given the fact that the value assumes an attitude of appreciation that community gives to certain works that address social and human necessities, it will express the appreciation given to those things, processes, actions contributing to the affirmation and development of personality and in the virtue of this fact, are desired and cherished.

This means that there is no value in and for it, there is no value apart from anything that has value and apart from “anyone” for whom it is value. In other words, value is not an exclusive attribute of any object, or of the subject, but their relationship on the background of social practice.

Therefore, we define value as the social relation expressing the appreciation of things, qualities, processes, actions by a human community in virtue of some correspondence with the social needs and ideals yielded by it.

This definition draws our attention to the fact that values involve an ontological plan of relational type. Value is not its material or ideal support, nor the mere desire of the subject, but the relationship that is established between people through reporting to these supports. For example, the value of “property” does not express a relation between possessor and the possessed object, but a relationship between the owner and

other people. In virtue of this relationship the owner can exercise the attributes of property, e.g. tenure, use, disposal and usufruct, the value of “lawfulness” (“neither the people nor their actions are legal” – T. Vianu – “...legal may be only the relations between individuals considered by rules of law”).

II.6. SYSTEM OF VALUES

● The structure of the system of values

The field of the values is characterized by:

- plurality of values;
- multitude of reciprocal relationships.

Due to the plurality of values of a society according to their political, legal, artistic, moral, religious nature, as well as their mutual realities, values are formed and manifested as an organic whole, as a system in a society.

The way in which the configuration of hierarchy of values and the unity of the system are formed can only be explained by using the social practice. This is because the system of values always expresses the requirements and aspirations of a social group with a certain position and power. Through the value system, the social group is able to assess the overall activity of its members, according to their objectives and ideas. Thus, some dominant groups define the needs of other groups and the values promoted by them according to the representation that they have in relation to their interests. In this case, the value system is not only the crystallizing of the historical experience (practice) of a society, but is the system of social control, since every action, every behaviour is reported positively or negatively to a value. This explains the great diversity and complexity of values.

In making their classification, we emphasize the following types of values:

- By type field distinguish;
- Economic values (wealth, prosperity, welfare);

- Political values (democracy, freedom, pluralism);
- Legal values (justice, legality, responsibility);
- Moral values (good, honesty, kindness);
- Artistic values (truth, certainty, objectivity);
- Philosophical values (ideality, happiness, humanism);
- Religious values (sacred, divine);
- As their role, values can be:
 - by type of the field can be distinguished:
 - Economic values (wealth, prosperity, welfare);
 - Political values (democracy, freedom, pluralism);
 - Legal values (justice, legality, responsibility);
 - Moral values (good, honesty, kindness);
 - Artistic values (truth, certainty, objectivity);
 - Philosophical values (ideal, happiness, humanism);
 - Religious values (sacred, divine).
 - by their role, values can be:
 - end values (core values) (human achievement, happiness);
 - mean values or derived values, instrumental (economic values that help achieve the political values, artistic values);
 - by their degree of impact on society:
 - Values of things;
 - Values of people;
 - by their holder, values can be:
 - Social values (political values, moral values);
 - Individual values (health, desire for self-actualization);
 - by the degree of stability:
 - values with low period of operation (transition values: individualism, free enterprise);
 - perennial values;

Highlights:

In each value system, whatever the level they constitute (individual, group, society), on the foreground lies a value that is central to structuring lifestyle. (Thus, whether it is proper for an individual, a social group or the whole society, the lifestyle includes – as a dynamic element - a specific table of values expressing the organization and coordination of needs, aspirations and of real or potential preferences). For example, in primitive society, in the foreground were moral values regulate relations between individuals, nations, or tribes, in slavery the political and philosophical values, and in feudalism the religious values.

In the course of history, the system of values changed its configuration in the sense that in a way ranks values in a society and in a different way in another. There is a dynamic of values according to the needs and requirements of the time, the interests of social groups.

Historically conditioned and influenced by many social factors, the value system (or certain parts of it) knows a certain dialectic, which gives it certain autonomy. It is the case of some values that meet generally human needs and aspirations and which, this way, surpass the age in which they appeared (see art and philosophy of Elada that even today offers a peerless delight and is a role model).

● The role of values

- In social life:

In analyzing the world of values, we consider that we should not only pay attention to the role of social life and human's life in values' formation, but also to the role of values in the existence and development of society and of each of its members. Once established, values work, their reason of being consists precisely in the place they have in the social and individual becoming, in their specific contributions to the development of society.

In social life, values are primarily intended to preserve social structures. This function of values always involves human activity, their penetration in any social action.

In society, the values function as regulator of action, and are presented in all its links: goal setting, the choice of means of action, assessing knowledge.

As a means of assessing human activities, values are elements that ensure continuity of social life, providing models to eliminate or restrict antisocial conditions.

Similarly, values fulfill the role of guiding the human action, then the motivation role, meaning that human action is preceded by the selection, prioritization, motivation, and correlation of needs and aspirations of various methods of social action. All this acquisition is based on a value system that the individual joins, system that includes the values accepted or rejected by society.

In social life, the values work as criteria for assessing human activities. Values involve – more or less shaped – criteria, reference systems based on which various human activities are assessed and ranked hierarchically. Values are also the main criterion for assessing and measuring the effectiveness of individual or collective action. They even play the role of evaluation principles of the achieved product. Values occur in lifestyle also through providing ideal means of action. They are the basics of setting up models of action.

The real models of action express what corresponds best to human nature in each historical epoch. But on one hand, models guide society in forming the individual, and on the other hand are a guide for the individual in his social integration process.

- In individual's life:

- the meaning of human acts committed on an individual level cannot be understood outside the system of values.

The individual's interest to know the values, how they rank, is strongly stimulated by the awareness of the influence that they have on his behaviour.

It should be emphasized, however, that only those values that convert from declared values into experienced values become constitutive of human behaviour and guide the individual in his entire experience.

The functionality of values is their ability to help individuals solve problems of different situations, offering him a complex of solutions. This means that participation to social life of individuals involves their use of values as tools. The production of values as spiritual tools always oscillates around constituted historical values of the time.

The humanization of the individual through values is a way of existence and of solving the dynamic opposition between the individual and society.

The assimilation of culture (as a totality of material and spiritual values) is not achieved through natural, biological mechanisms, but also by assimilating values. Separated from the environment (world) of values, the human does not accomplish himself as human and remains at the stage of animalism. That is precisely why some authors say about culture (as a set of values) that it is: C. K. M. Kluckhohn – our social legacy as opposed to organic heritage, R. Linton – our social inheritance destructive of the biological one.

In conclusion, we can say that value generates, censors and measures the inclination degree of individuals to the established social commandments, its integration into society.

CHAPTER III

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN MEDIA

III.1. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION - SPECIFIC AND DIMENSIONS -

Politics is a universe of communication. The complexity of the relationship between politics and communication makes the defining of the concept of **political communication** very difficult: *“in a very broad sense, political communication means all social relations that politicians establish with the governed for the success of their action. But in a narrower and more frequently used sense, political communication means all communication facilities used by politicians in a society where the media have become, by their impact, irreplaceable links”*.⁸⁰

Political communication is an intentional process that takes place in a social space, having as subject political events. Political communication can take place through any sign, symbol or signal transmitting the meaning (voting, political assassination, riots, political posters, advertisements and so on). The political activity has in its focus the emergence of collective problems, the formulation of questions addressed to public authorities, the developing of solutions, the conflict between these projects and their way of regulation. Communication impregnates all political activity to the extent that almost all behaviours of this kind involve the recourse to some form of communication.

The specificity of relations and political contemporary activities is the crisis of political faith, requiring politicians to invest more and more in communication *“as soon as there is any difficulty between them and those who instruct them, it is immediately considered a << problem of communication >>”*⁸¹.

⁸⁰ Dominique Chagnollanud, *Dictionary of political and social life*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 21.

⁸¹ Gabriel Thoveron, *Political communication today*, Antet Publisher, Bucharest, 2006.

Characterized by conceptual ambiguity, communication can be analyzed more efficiently in its relations with politics, by investigating the effective discursive practices that come to be political practices. The current political life can be characterized as a continuous communication effort of political speakers to legitimize their actions, and discussion is the main way by which the political participation is achieved.

Political communication has three basic dimensions: the pragmatic, the symbolic and the structural dimension⁸².

The pragmatic dimension aims to study the actual practices of communication. From the perspective of the theory of signs, which studies the relationship between signs and their users, the pragmatic concerns, firstly, the “relationship that unites the sender with the receiver and which is mediated by communication”⁸³. Thus, it is suggested the use of political communication to interact according to psychosocial factors such as persuasion, conviction, seduction, information, ordering, negotiation, domination. There are not involved the message content or the structure of a communication system, but rather the form of the social relationship that is established through communication. From a practical perspective, communication can be seen as a representation of politics, defined as an area of the tension between cooperation and conflict. When serving the cooperation of partners, political communication is a discussion focused on the concern of mutual understanding. Thus, deliberation is itself a collective exam, aimed at a decision-making. When communication ends with the protagonists’ will to dominate, it acquires the aspect of manipulation. We find that this distinction re - takes two classical aspects of political thought, to which are added several historical variants: harmonization conception and strategy conception. “The more we talk, the better we get along” - admits easily common sense. Certainly, this postulate is no stranger to the success of media discourse and serves as an accessory to diffusion of technological innovations to crystallize an ideology of communication. However, in the mentioned postulate is pointed the social bond issue

⁸² Jacques Gerstle, *Communication Sciences and Public Relations*, European Institute Publisher, Iași, 2002.

⁸³ P. Watzlawick; Jackson Helmick-Beavin, *Une logique de la communication*, Seuil, 1972.

and its political dimension, in our case, the ability to live together, to cooperate and to integrate, or to stand and fight. Communication is politics from the moment that is part of the tension between cooperation and conflict.

From the perspective of the symbolic dimension, politics is a world of powers, but also a universe of signs with social effectiveness, not only cognitive or expressive. Language, as well as its realization in speech, allows finding agreement, compromise, thus having a pacifying virtue in social relations. But discourse also serves the conflict, strategy, manipulation, domination. Signs are also weapons, resources in the political struggle, not only because of the possibility it offers through direct aggression against the opponent, but also because they have in themselves representations of the world, perceptions of social and physical reality.

In order to give a sense of their experience, people make use of signs with meaning and significance i.e. symbols. To symbolize means to represent reality and to establish a meaningful relationship between things. For this, human beings have language, but also rituals, myths, etc. Political communication, like other forms of human communication, uses symbols that are available in codes. A code is stock of such signs and a repertoire of rules that combine rightly for the members of a linguistic community. Signs, such as words, are selected in stock and combined according to rules, in order to give statements and messages. The works that are focused on political language have highlighted the strategic possibilities that they offer, to various degrees of use. Symbols are characterized by their great semantics and by their power of evocation, identification, or projection. The strategy of statement of symbols allows individual or collective speakers to achieve controlled acts of language, to be more or less careful about statements (distance) and to provide the audience (tension) to produce involvement, interpretation or association messages. Argumentative strategies work in all logical- discursive operations to build acceptable schematizations, meaning representations of the object of discourse, but also images of interlocutors.⁸⁴ The strategic use of communication norms (situational,

⁸⁴ Grize, J.-B., *De la logique à l'argumentation*, Genève, Droz, 1982.

discursive, conventional norms) also shows the manner in which interlocutors interpret their role in communication to show their skills, or to disqualify the opponent. Language and its implementation in speech are often considered the “master” of all signifying practices.⁸⁵ Semiology was introduced into the domain of fixed (photographs, posters) or animated images (cinema and television) to demonstrate the mechanisms and their symbolic effectiveness. Communication technologies open, from this perspective, new ways, especially through video-culture. Music, painting, literature and all forms of artistic expression proves that “political text” can take many forms. Beyond the particular culture, the political message could be conveyed, according to manners that are often less organized, through all types of media: songs, slogans, banners, graffiti, tags, gadgets, comics, cartoons etc.

Regarding the structural dimension of communication, it refers to the ways in which it moves forward. It is about channels, networks and media through which communication flow takes place. Using informatics metaphor, you would assume that the pragmatic aspects of communication are logical equivalents, and symbolic aspects are cultural data specific to a particular community, while structural aspects define the material of treatment of information. In general, for political communication there is a distinction made between **institutional channels**, such as parliament or government, **organizational channels** such as political parties and other organized forces, **media channels** such as print and broadcast organs and **interpersonal channels**, formed of social groups and relationships.

The concept of network should be used with caution, because its meaning changes depending on the context in which it is used. Distinction must be made between the social network and the communication network. The former is defined as opposed to a device, as an unincorporated social organization, i.e. with imprecise boundaries, with actors that are little specialized in random roles and connections. Compared to this, the communication network is presented as an infrastructure, a set of material possibilities of communication, differing from the communication structure defined

⁸⁵ Nicolae Drăgoi, Marian Zidaru, *Politology*, „Andrei Șaguna” Foundation Publishing House, Constanța, 2003.

as all communications exchanged effectively in a group. A communication network determines therefore the range of material as possible, but does not decisively determine the actual structure of communication. As G. Tremblay states, within a network, there are three factors that determine the setting of a structure of communication: the distributed information resources, partners' interest for the exchange and distribution of power in the control of information (accessibility, storage capacity, retention, handling and capability to use information at the right time).

III.2. PUBLIC SPACE

- PLACE OF MANIFESTATION OF THE POLITICAL ACTION -

The public space represents the place of intersection between politics and communication. In this space is achieved the political participation of various social stakeholders, actors who discuss issues of public concern in terms of public interest. Discussions are conducted so that argument techniques are used. Participation in debates is seen as a way to control power.

Public space has a conflictual character, but in its perimeter is being negotiated the compromise: the differences are balanced, the representation of those who are not in power becomes easier, those who are in power, adjust their speech⁸⁶.

The first public space is considered to be the ancient Athenian agora, where citizens discussed important issues, matters of public interest. But participants were selected according to certain criteria (not every individual could attend the discussions from the agora). In addition, speakers wanted to excel in front of the audience, especially through the form, then the content of their speech.

The promoter of the concept of **public space** is Jurgen Habermas exponent of the critical theory (Frankfurt School). His theories fall into the category of critical theories about the media, continuing the work of Theodor Adorno. Habermas

⁸⁶ Mirela Asith, *The Political Universe as a spectacle*, ROCSIR - Romanian Cultural Studies Internet Review, No. 3/2004.

examines the relationship between mass communication and democracy, the core element of his theory being the public space, that integrates the public opinion, politicians, the media. The public sphere means that place where „gathered as public, citizens deal unconstrained, under the guarantee of being able to meet and unite freely, and express their views freely on matters of public interest”⁸⁷.

His analysis focuses on the relationship between the state and the public sphere. The public sphere was formed throughout history as a place of mediation between civil society and state, a place where **public opinion** is formed and expressed. If the first historic landmark in building public opinion is the agora, the next step in the development of public space is designated by the emergence of new public places where were debated topics of general interest.

Thus, in the XVIII century in Europe emerge literary cafes, academies, clubs, lounges and media. In these places individuals discuss, share ideas and opinions, trying to reach a consensus. At first, however, as in ancient Greece, the access to this space was allowed only for individuals with a high degree of culture and a thriving wealth.

To remedy this situation and to broaden the sphere of participants to these discussions and thus to the politics, elites of Enlightenment initiated an action to educate the masses based on various means (from the theatre to the popular literature) in order to include wider categories in debates. Knowledge is disseminated through various means: education, theatre, cultural information media, popular literature, all leading to a democratization of political life. Enlightenment elites placed themselves as mediator between the government and the population, their place being taken later by journalists, especially starting with the nineteenth century that brought transformations in politics. Individuals now have more opportunities to participate in political life: universal vote, various forms of protest became legal (strikes, marches, protests, organizing unions).

⁸⁷ Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and communication*, Politica Publisher, Bucharest, 1983, p. 126.

There is a closeness between politics and masses directly through meetings with voters and indirectly through the media. Newspapers and magazines increase quantitatively, new media emerge in the twentieth century (radio in 1901 and television in the '50s). The professionalization and institutionalization of the communication activity increased the number of individuals involved in the debate. The extent of political life calls for a new public space: the media system. The actors who play their roles in contemporary public space are now political leaders, political parties, journalists who send messages from the power to the mass and warn politicians about aspirations, expectations and needs of the population, specialists in polls, in communication, in image and the public.

Jurgen Habermas criticizes the historical evolution of public space, developing a theory of the declining role of the public opinion under the combined impact of technocracy and mass communication. Compared to the Enlightenment model, the bourgeois model has devolved. The nationalized domain replaces the public space domain of democratic and civil nature.

The place of the politics is taken by unions and political parties, overlapping public sphere, whose elements they used to be. During the Era of Enlightenment, was developed the principle of “public affairs”, linked also to the establishment of the civil society. This principle clearly allowed progressive analysis of the discussion and public criticism with regards to political choices and decisions.

The public space was formed by uniting private individuals in an audience. Free political discussion is considered to be the main legitimacy instance in the public space and the main expression of the principle of advertising⁸⁸. In the public sphere is developed the “political consciousness” that requires to the power legal regulations regarding the functioning of economic and social life, through the development of general available laws that act as public opinion (“general will” of J.J. Rousseau).

From Habermas’s point of view, the explosion of mass communication and advertising, starting with the nineteenth century, makes the public space to be taken

⁸⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *L'espace public*, Payot, Paris, 1987.

over by the state and the technocratic apparatus, while the critical feature of the debate was turned into an integration feature. In the age of media society, the institutional and technocratic device takes control over the public space, which originally appeared as a counter-power.

The political action in the modern public space is based on legitimacy, which is the new principle of political action and is obtained through political desacralisation by using techniques as well as formal and informal strategies of advertising and political evaluation.

The new model of public space is the intersection of several fields: journalism field, political field, the cultural field, understood in a broad sense.⁸⁹

New communication technologies significantly increase the ability of individuals to express themselves in public, in return, limits the participation of individuals in political communication and therefore in the public debate of political decisions. Paradoxically, the public space is reduced just by increasing the access and participation of individuals to it⁹⁰.

This phenomenon is explained by the fact that the increasing access to public space - through new technologies - in fact, generates an *excessive fragmentation of public space* and the emergence of so-called “sphericules”⁹¹ or “spaces “partially unrelated to each other”⁹². Given the proliferation of individual experiences in the public space, the public interest can no longer be negotiated.

The proliferation of new communication technologies has enhanced political participation of the public. On the other hand, new technologies have not eliminated disparities, or the access to public space: many authors draw attention to the differences between the resources among those limited to television to obtain political

⁸⁹ Cornelia Constantin, Ramona-Elena Cherciu, Cristina Georgeta Leș, *Malfunctions of the institutions of creation of the public space*, in Adrian-Paul Iliescu (coordinator), *Mentalities and institutions*, Ars Docendi Publisher, Iași, 2002.

⁹⁰ Lance Bennet, Robert Entman, *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Bernard Miege, *L'espace public: au-delà de la sphère politique* in Hermès 17-18, *Communication et politique*, CNRS édition Paris, 1995.

information and those equipped with sophisticated and last generation communication devices.

Equal access to (public) communication resources is a problem that concerns not only the public's democratic status, but also that of politicians; similar to the diversity of communication sources and the quality of political communication. The democratic dimension of political communication should be evaluated not only with respect to the access and participation of the public to the negotiation of the public agenda, but also in terms of the possibility of decision-making leaders to interact with the public. Related to this problem, in the literature were outlined two models of interpretation.⁹³ Thus, some authors consider that the current configuration of the public space favors the visibility of politicians. Miede (ibid., 1995), one of the promoters of this view, considers that the “fragmentation” of public space as a result of new communication technologies caused political passivity of the public so that, ultimately, the public agenda is defined by elites acting in the “dominant” public space, primarily by political elites. On the other hand, political elites participate in the political communication with the support of sophisticated consulting devices, which increases the distance and disparity between politicians and / or institutions and voters / citizens: *“Is it asymmetry ever greater between individuals / subjects / citizens and social institutions which, due to communication strategies come to manage through increasingly sophisticated tools, the social consensus ”*(Miede, ibid.).

Recent studies show that the impact of the new practices of political communication is felt on each of the key dimensions of democracy:

- status of the majority and of the citizen;
- public culture and democratic education;
- individual and collective forms of participation;
- institutions having a deliberative role from the public space;
- political and media pluralism;

⁹³ Camelia Beciu, *Public space in the information society. Impact of new communication technologies in Thematic studies in the Information Society - Knowledge Society - concepts, solutions and strategies for Romania*, Institute of Sociology, 2001.

- political responsibility of government.

Democracy signifies decisions of the majority and this majority is offered the opportunity to be informed about the theme proposed for the vote (usually, a subject of public interest) and to choose between alternatives. From this point of view, media generates contradictory effects on democratic practices:

Direct participation is not sufficient to constitute a democratic majority, it is also necessary a “*public culture*” which is defined as “*a minimum of shared values and manifested in everyday practice, people being this able to experience themselves the status of members or potential participants in a democratic society*”.⁹⁴

Both culture and public agenda are kept by *informed* citizens and obviously, *interested* in participating to politics. The logic of the media trade coverage would have generated a state of apathy and political disengagement of the public, a phenomenon known as “media malaise”: “media malaise term refers to accounts claiming that common practices in political communications by the news and by party campaigns hinder civic engagement, meaning learning about public affairs, trust in government, and political activism”⁹⁵.

“Public cynicism Culture” raises - the opposite - the problem of democratic *civic culture* and of *democratic education*, both depending on the degree to which *community and deliberative practices* are developed. In this process, the media should have a decisive contribution to trigger *public debates*. Therefore, the more the democratized media are developed, the more likely are greater public debates.

“*We assist therefore to the upgrading of the classical notion of public space from the fundamental work of Habermas - public space, a source of social emancipation possible due to the fact that the “public interest” results from a “rational consensus”*”

⁹⁴ Peter Dahlgren, *The public Sphere and the Net: Structure, Space and Communication in Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁹⁵ Norris Pippa, *A virtuous Circle. Political Communication in Post-industrial Societies*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

based on “practical discussions” between social actors who accepted in advance to follow the criterion of the best argument in the given situation.”⁹⁶

III.3. THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON POLITICAL PARTIES

In the classic sense of the theory of democracy, the media are designed to distribute and to disseminate information about public issues including political issues, to accurately and timely inform citizens, which, in return, will influence decision-making in the society.

In general, normative standards of democratic nature are those that impose the operation of the media in democratic societies by:

- Supervision of daily events that may affect the existence of citizens, and the creation of false events to enhance audience;
- Identification of the main socio-political issues;
- Creation of a platform for debate, for the achievement of a free market of ideas, for the expression of spokespersons, of opinion leaders, of power brokers - especially since most of the times access to the media is extremely difficult for minorities and marginalized groups;
- Transmission of various elements of political discourse;
- Analysis of the activities of authorities, of institutions and other public agencies, to make them accountable for their actions;
- Stimulation of the civic activism to prevent superficial understanding of political processes based on prejudices, which work on emotional or simplistic bias;
- Editorial autonomy that resists attempts to shatter the freedom of the press;
- Respect for the public.

⁹⁶ Camelia Beciu, *Public space in the information society. Impact of new communication technologies in Thematic studies in the Information Society - Knowledge Society - concepts, solutions and strategies for Romania*, Institute of Sociology, 2001.

Discovering its ability to stimulate public debate, to direct and to influence it, the media enthusiastically assumed the more and more alluring role of political actor, to which it has printed along different shades, self posting as being either arbitrator, mentor or coordinator of public opinion.⁹⁷

The relation between parties and mass-media, from the perspective of the political partidism, can be described on a gradual scale, as such: 1. maximal, 2. voluntary affiliation, 3. ordinary coincidence, 4. „ad hoc”, 5. absolute neutrality.⁹⁸

The “exchange” model in media relations with political parties, based on constant interaction between the two institutions, and especially the mutual institutional involvement - journalists employed by politicians and politicians required by journalists - made politicians receive more attention in the media information and made journalists receive information or obtain preferential conditions in receiving data on political bodies. Thus, media people are conditioned by leaders of information, by those who have the best information directly from the source, and that set the tone in interpreting events. However, with the appearance of television, the collaboration between political parties and broadcasters acquire another dimension, much larger and closer, and the political image became more important than the ideological message.

Political knowledge and a high level of political information are largely related with the exposure to the communication process through media, but also with the perception of communication and electoral advertising. Participation in public debates, reading and critical analysis of information received through the media, lead to the formation and crystallization of developed and well-structured views.

The media plays a vital role in civic education of citizens, because it prescribes and indicates the political rules, it structures and mediates the understanding of decision-making processes, and it coordinates the movements of actors on the political scene.

From a historical perspective, the development of media coincides with the development of liberal society. Theoretically, the press monitors the activity of power

⁹⁷ Victor Moraru, *Media versus politics*, Chişinău, 2001 (online version).

⁹⁸ Jose Luis Dader, *Tratado de comunicación política*, Madrid, Cersa, 1998.

and the act of power takes place under the critical eye of the media. The consequence of this concept is that a free press is an absolute guarantee of a free society.

In the process of political information, the existence of multiple sources of communication supports and is supported by the multi-party system of democracy.

The media has a significant role also in education in the spirit of democracy. The cultivation of democratic values, the pre-eminence of individual rights and the availability of information help the social body function better. In the classical sense, democracy meant direct participation of citizens in political communication process. Regarded in a democratic sense, the process of political communication, although keeps a strong hierarchy, is purely informative and not directive - as it happened in authoritarian-communist societies, in popular democracies.

The hierarchical model of communication involves the need to request citizen's support, the need to involve them in order to win their appreciation. The citizen has the opportunity and freedom to ignore or accept the act of positive communication. But in contemporary democracies, known as "polyarchal democracy", the situation becomes more complex and the dimension and systemic diversity make almost impossible the communication on a personal or individual level. For a better communication on all social levels, with all existing institutions it is needed a greater diversification of the communicative process itself: communication between institutions, between political groups, between different organizations, the extension and branching of the media in the basic structures of society.

Those who do not recognize the media as the "fourth power" see this it only as a social subsystem, among others, which does nothing more than to reflect the social dimensions and properties of the social assembly. Media "reflects" the existing organizational structure, expresses the tensions or the relationships between power centers, and does not have its own identity. Media means are functions of the community, representing their level of development and being visible expressions of communication efficiency.

One of the phenomena associated with the damage of public credibility of political parties is, in recent years, low voter loyalty. Political and ideological instability of the members of society, as well as the lowering of political participation level, of institutional activism, are considered consequences of the emotional publicity of public existence.

For Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee⁹⁹ communication remains a fundamental feature of democracy, even if in Marxist thought, this coordinate is labeled in a negative way, as “mere talk” without consequences on people's lives. For them, technology development does nothing but extend debates and political dialogue beyond the existing boundaries, responding to a social organism more highly developed and diversified. Society and politics are characterized by a beneficial “discussion system,” generating ideas and stimulating civic existence. This interpretative line of communication led to a greater “democratization” of social life.

Individuals benefit from interactive ways to address government and can exercise their right to free expression and the right to participate in decision making in a direct and unrestricted way. Moreover, the media are a political incentive factor of the younger generation, the exposure of teenagers to social life starts early and their ability to understand what is happening increases exponentially, and so they become the next “responsible citizens”.

Regarding the political message transmitted by media, public figures can be classified according to exercise and apologetic or oratorical competence. From the perspective of communicative qualities - imaginative or pathetic that they have - political characters belong to a visual group of features. Political actors that use expressive skills (speaking, inquiries, etc.), qualify for verbal style, belonging par excellence to political rhetoric. The imaginative figures use primarily, in order to build political messages, fantasies, and myths of the community to which they address, using the principles of political advertising as methods.

⁹⁹Bernard Berelson; Paul Lazarsfeld; William McPhee, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*, U. Of Chicago P., Chicago, 1954, p. 82.

The “new” political communication makes use of the technical and strategic achievements of commercial advertising. Political advertising has two aspects: on the one hand it refers to the activity of “sale” of a politician, as selling a product, to carefully seduce the consumer - voter. The “market” will be divided into a certain number of “targets” (undecided, militants, opponents) that the politician must attract into an adequate advertising represented by a valued image and representative slogans. This is the new model of communication of political action – the “**marketing model**”, which exceeded the other two traditional models, namely “**dialogical model**”, in which they exchange ideas based on streamlining arguments, in order to promote general interest, and the “**propaganda model**“, which sets out the roles and calls on the public emotions and its belief.

On the other hand, political advertising means buying advertising space for dissemination of announcements, posters, or advertisements on different media supports. For media institutions, this practice is beneficial for two reasons: firstly, it provides income from the sale of airtime (private media institutions receive most of the revenue from advertising) and secondly these products offered by the political class can be run without requiring intervention from journalists. In addition, it contributes to the manifestation of the democratic exercise.

The techniques proven effective in commercial advertising were translated also in politics, with the purpose of assimilation of concepts, doctrines, ideas, or political ideologies. Advertising techniques constitute themselves in public persuasion strategies, in this case seen as the electorate. Media practices must contribute to the democratization of political action through the development of political human’s responsibility towards the electorate. At first reluctant, politicians ended up leaving themselves in the hands of image counselors, who make a politician be sold like any other economic good. Politicians have adapted to the requirements of new media. Politicians and political parties will develop new political behaviour in relation to the public, due to the changing of the communication relationship between political and public.

In this communication relationship, the preferred channel used is the audiovisual. In 1964, in the United Kingdom, the Liberal Party was made known to the public through BBC in 1965, in France the opposition was present in broadcasting programs and during elections the outcome was a ballotage for General de Gaulle. In U.S., the presidential campaign Nixon vs. Kennedy is significant in this respect; the lesson given by Kennedy's election was taught not only by his opponent but also by future candidates.

The researchers of political communication talk about its standardization namely, setting it into a pattern that belongs rightfully to the American political space. This pattern refers to strategies that adjust the communication action to specific techniques of the advertising, economic or show- business market. Through these communication strategies, politicians talk to journalists, the public, opponents, and public figures. The project of the political author is structured according to marketing strategies, in which the “**offer**” is the political program and the result of “**demand**” (the expectations of the electorate). The “offer” is based on the properties of the ‘**market**’ (the public) that presents expectations, needs, needs that have been previously researched. The “**product**” is addressed to a “**target**”: different social, professional, ethnic groups, with a certain degree of training and education etc.. These techniques include communication strategies, through which the offer is made known to a wide audience. As the main source of information remains the media, especially television, the “offer” must be adapted to the channel. To maximize its persuasion, the political discourse relies on verbal, as well as the non-verbal language.

Through political communication, political action becomes public information. Through this process is formed the mentality that political visibility is not only a feature of democracy, but also a social practice. The communication of political action helps to achieve civil responsibilities, knowingly. But not all political actions are discussed, interpreted and accordingly sanctioned by the media and the public.

Political action, because of political communication, is subject to assessments, judgments, and interpretation by the public through the media.

In terms of the resources required for a politician or a political party to have (financial, logistic, symbolic) the access to communication of political action is discriminatory. Some politicians have less access to communication and hence their visibility is lower, so the chances that their messages reach the public are diminished. The character of the American political model is paradoxical: apparently, citizen's participation in politics through voting is decreasing, but it compensates with other forms of civic participation: social movements, associative culture, and affirmative action.

The Americanization of political communication concept is controversial. Specialists oscillate between considering it a global model of political communication and seeing it as originating in the U.S. and adapted to the requirements of different countries. Some contemporary political communication research confirms the existence of a common model of communication to democratic countries.¹⁰⁰ However, the project of communication is an integral part of any policy action plan, and communication provides visibility of the political in various ways: in electoral periods, in political ceremonies, or as political routine.

Political advertising, arisen from the development of new electronic technologies and information transmission technologies, managed to expand political exposure of individuals to the maximum, the accessibility and penetration being much larger, and the time spent in front of media environments surpasses the time of exposure to traditional forms of capturing political messages.¹⁰¹ But here it should be noted that negative publicity, unlike the discursive effects of sarcasm, criticism or irony, influences in a double sense, marking also the image of the one who uses it. Distorting reality and manipulating images as political arsenal become effective

¹⁰⁰ Ralph Negrine *The communication of politics*, Sage, Londra, 1996.

¹⁰¹ Jay Blumner, *Elections, The media and the Modern Publicity Process in Public Communication. The New Imperatives*, Ferguson, 1990.

especially when used by an outside group, which is not involved directly and only if the information media are neutral.

The influencing of the political content of materials published in the media by modeling tools produces the establishment of some links in public understanding and leads to the influencing of the understanding way of the presented phenomena.

Professionalizing of news production and its domination by a “standard” method is another way of predetermining messages. The content of the topics presented is marked by the main weaknesses of news forming. The decision on what is and what is not news depends on a scheme of programs, which, in turn, is marked by prejudices towards the interest of the audience or remains up to the journalist. Contextualization is another function through which a constant interpretative pressure is exerted on the events. Putting a subject into a certain context and associating it with other events with negative or positive connotation, leads to total deformation of the informative situation. Journalists exercise their primary function as resources for defining events, and they are the first able to put on an interpretative path an event, a politician, a message sent to the social body, thus making them gain from the start some level of intelligibility, a certain degree of acceptability and an ideological determinant.

Media intrusion into politics is a theory of the 1990s, which refers mainly to the analyzing of the influence of television. Reality presented by this environment, is said to be devoid of any link with the real existence, being disfigured and unconscious.

Distortion in the interest for the spectacular - reducing everything to rumour or gossip - and for celebrities, transposition in sensationalism of everyday life become negative constants of “intrusionism”, the intrusion of media in politics being the one that ultimately causes the “disinterest of individuals in politics and the disappearance or reduction of the role of the political party institution”.¹⁰²

News about corruption, insufficiency, personal and ideological failures have led to the widespread of public skepticism towards political institutions of the moment.

¹⁰² Doru Pop, *Mass-media and politics*, European Institute, Iași, 2000, p. 57.

The distrust in political parties and the erosion of the authority of political system have led, in recent decades, to the imposition of the media as a public institution. Policy in mass society has become an activity with little public appeal, the inability of a greater interactivity and the ideological immobility specific to political practices of the early nineteenth century were perpetuated and induced a constant attitude of rejection of the politics from the electorate. The transformation of the electorate from political audience into spectator made the political role restructure itself. Moreover, under the influence of sharp commercialization of production on a social level, politics itself has become a consumer good. Political parties have gradually lost specific powers, and the interest moved towards personal charisma, towards the media integration of the politician figure.

The political party as an institution and the politician as a social mediator lost their central function for which were designed, especially on the institutional level, that of communication mechanisms between those who hold power in decision-making and citizens. Journalists have become more important in campaigning than politicians themselves. Journalists have the power to decide on the political personality that deserves or not public attention, thus what political personality comes to the attention of the electorate. The electoral game has changed radically after the appearance of the media and the addiction of political parties to press organs become harmful through both the political process and the function played and self-imposed by journalists in society, that of guardians of democracy.

Another major reason for the “institutionalization” of the media, for its transformation from a civic power – extended expression of individual freedom of expression – into an ideological power is precisely the emergence of mass democracy forms.

The democratization, the new democratic positions held by citizens and the expanding of electorate’s influence – as a result of the extending of the right to vote, elections of public representatives by direct vote, elections in general as a form of expression of political will – have made the political dependent of accessibility

among large masses of voters. It allowed simultaneously the delegation of some attributions over to the media. The elitist, aristocratic democracy disappeared, giving way to a new conception of politics, in which voters use their rights to self-represent themselves in decision-making. The liberal conception of democracy is the cause that leads to strengthening the role of the media in the electoral process, where the opinions of others, of the winning majority become relevant.

The constant reference to public opinion and the use of its “authority” became ways of modeling the decision-making processes, the representatives of the elected being under the dictatorship and the threat of modifications of the electoral structures that brought them to power. Thus, democratization of politics increased media influence and power. Public opinion and gaining its adherence become the only rationality of being of politics, where the media as a unique communication tool, fast, efficient and permissive becomes a determinant factor and self-sufficient . The media must and have the duty to organize and mobilize public opinion in favor of democracy, but especially for those in power, for interest groups and for political authority in general. Journalists are much more dependent on sources of information than it seems at first instance, and therefore are more vulnerable to indirect manipulation. If a politician or a political party refuses the transmission of information needed for the process of informing the public, journalists are forced to resort to various favors to maintain the most cordial relations with these parties in order to determine their cooperation. In an environment that is poor in sources of information and where institutional communication is centralized and strongly hierarchical, free information and the objectivity of messages remain simple myths. Because politicians know that their presence in public life generates news and the media devours such figures that produce “first pages”, many skilful political figures exaggerate in using the “public” quality of their person, turning media into a personal object, a toy serving their own image.

However, when the market is wide open, and political parties practice and apply practices, and criteria of open society, the situation is reversed. Ideal for a free press

is the existence of various sources of information, journalists having the power to decide how to represent that information. Regarding the political importance of the media in recent years, research has shown that the media offers mainly behavioural patterns. Creating public images, the mass media presents acceptable attitudes and condemns those prospects and behaviour that are outside the “acceptability”. Actually, the press gets to say what is allowed and what is not allowed, what is not right in a particular society. Media leads to integration and homogenization of society, by presenting sets of cultural values that the public will accept, and by communicating what is consistent with generally accepted standards, justice regulations, and moral provisions.

Often, the information and political messages are hidden in seemingly apolitical subjects, oriented towards entertainment or public communication. Through the value judgments that it issues, through the interpretation of and their placing in certain contexts, through disseminating negative news in a particular ideological direction, the media induces electoral informational stereotypes in those societies in which mass media standards shape the public existence of members of such societies, and politics can simply follow the line drawn by media.

III.4. FUNCTION OF MASS-MEDIA IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

In its years of pioneering, press was financed and controlled by political or religious authorities of the time. Until the emergence of newspapers for the general public, the information was intended solely for the financial and aristocratic elite, bankers, military nobility and high clergy.

Modern democracy has liberated the press from the strict pressure of authority. The massification of communication - mass communication led to the democratization of information, which made the importance of the media to grow exponentially. Hence the specific functions of the media in the political system:

- Public disclosure;

- Interpretation of news and facts;
- Influencing voters' opinion;
- Prioritizing political action;
- Ensuring political-electorate interactivity.

In general, the maximum functions of the media exceed the relationship with politics, although its main purpose is to produce a higher degree of social conformity among consumers. Political analyst Harold Lasswell mentions three fundamental functions of the media, namely:

- **Supervision** of the world to present ongoing events;
- **Interpretation** of the meaning of events;
- **Socialization** of individuals in their cultural environment.

However, to these three functions must be added the fourth, namely the deliberate **manipulation** of political processes.

How the four functions occur, affects the lives of individuals, groups, social organizations as well as the development of local and international policies.

III.4.1. Supervision

Supervision involves two major goals: focusing on certain institutions, events, and political personalities, their public debate and sanctioning the issues that are contrary to generally accepted standards. The primary function of the media is to meet the needs of some people and the questions of others. As Marshall McLuhan¹⁰³, noticed, mass media are sensory extensions of individuals who can not observe directly and personally most of the events that interest them and the community they belong to. Mass media manipulates the interest and attention of the public through investigations and sensational revelations, supervising at the same time the eventful priorities.

¹⁰³ McLuhan, Marshall, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, Political Publishing, Bucharest, 1975.

Media advertising has become a major source of political motivation. Thus, politicians who try to capture or to avoid publicity want to schedule or to structure events thinking about media effects. A negative publicity produces disastrous effects of a political approach and the effort to remove the consequences of such advertising is twofold. Media serves to reaffirm existing certainties, trust in society and in its proper functioning. In addition to drawing attention to matters of public interest, the media offers to the public other clues about the importance of certain issues. Major themes are widely developed – on the front page with big headlines and richly illustrated or as special radio or television shows. Less important issues are buried in the final pages or are given a brief radio or television presentation.

All presentations, either short or underdeveloped provide an aura of relevance for some subjects that became public. By simply presenting a character or an institution, the media can give them a status. Media works mainly as social legitimacy agencies – as forces through which, in fact, values and standards are restated which, in turn, support a political and social *status quo*. But, just as the media bring problems to the attention of the public, it may also condemn certain people or certain events to anonymity, by not paying attention to them. Also, the media ignores some issues that do not seem interesting enough to be transmitted, on the basis of generally accepted journalistic criteria, or issues that are failing to capture their attention. Citizens use media communication tools to keep in touch with what is happening around them, and the media are their “eyes and ears” in relation to the world.

III.4.2. Interpretation

From the beginning, the media assumed the privilege of interpreting social and political life through contextualization and directing of the public attention to elements it considered relevant.

Interpretative methods of media form and deform the opinion on political phenomena, directing their impact on the lives of individuals. There were situations

where the media appealed to intentional changes by modifying the language to give the events the desired specificity. Suggesting relationships between various events and their causes, the media can form opinions even without telling the audience what to believe or what to think about. Or, as Bernard Cohen said: “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.”¹⁰⁴

III.4.3. Socialization

The third basic function of the media mentioned by Lasswell, is socialization. This involves the learning of basic principal values and of basic directions for preparing the individual for the integration action in the cultural background. If at first, socialization studies ignored media because parents and schools were their main agents, subsequently it was established that the media play an important role in political socialization. The main body of information that young people acquire on the nature of their world come from the media. Media information presents certain particular facts to young people as if they were general values and provide behavioural patterns. The information received is widely used in forming their own opinions and in keeping up with a changing world.

In the negative sense of socialization, media induce a false perception of relevant events in the life of the community.

Marxist critics consider that socialization through the media leads to: public conformism and the accepting of state violence over the individual. For example, the media interest for morbid, abominable and murderer turns murders, terrorists and rejects of the society in permanences of social life, which legitimizes even more the tough and aggressive intervention of the police, army or institutions which are designed to maintain order in the individuals' social life.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, Bernard, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, 1963.

In its positive sense, socialization through the media makes citizens to actively participate in political actions. But socialization through the media creates stereotypes. Tendency towards imitation and simplification affects behaviour, convictions and the perception of reality, and the most interested stakeholders about stereotyping the reaction of media consumers are politicians.

Authority in the political arena is acquired only through public expression, namely, when a subject or a politician enters the network of public information.

Public recognition of the politician is his reason for being. In this sense, politics is bound to obey rules of cooperation with the media. Nobody ever won a battle against the media and this makes social legitimation that the politics needs to be one of the most powerful advantages it has, against the political system.

Before reaching the consciousness of the political public, information passes through multiple filters. As noted, the media selection process is subjective.

Conditioning of the media filter is internal (airtime, indications from managers, behaviour of colleagues, etc.) and external (indirect censorship of economic and political constraints).

Political communication suffers major influences from the media, in this case also due to the tremendous influence that the opinion leader has in the media. Opinion leaders have a relevant role as far as personal relationships are concerned, in terms of establishing the political message. This one provides political communication from the media to the audience.

The presentation of ideas and materials through an information filter of an authoritative personality, opinion leader, is more relevant than direct political message reception. This is explained by the reluctance of individuals to official messages, that they deny in favour of the “customised” relation, more efficient and more flexible.

The relationship with the opinion leader of the average media consumer is seen by the latter as a “personal relationship” as the opinion leader expresses and manifests an authority by the “common baggage” of socio-political convictions and beliefs, to

which the audience adheres through free will. The public, who shares the ideas of the opinion leader, consider informal, bold and original his assertions and easily take over his intellectual baggage, dragging this into the personal mechanism of relationship with the society and with the politics.

III.4.4. Manipulation

Recent studies in social psychology and media communication support the basic idea of the social individuals' fundamental dependence on media. Specialists consider that fear of isolation and rejection in society causes the individual to conform to the general opinion, generally accepted behaviour, communication rules validated by society. Fear of isolation makes public opinion very powerful, from the individual's view. When public opinion expresses a high degree of conformity, it becomes a factor that controls the options. Media turns into a product accepted by the general values of the society, at this point emerging its role of manipulation and persuasion. In this way, citizens feel compelled to follow mainstream ideas, the directing policy induced by media, so that individuals do not feel marginalized, excluded and deprived of the safety of identification with a group or the society in general.

Prominent forms of control and manipulation of the media are represented by the following actions:

- placing out of the context a message, event or political phenomenon;
- reducing the period of presentation of a message, event or political phenomenon;
- editorial limitations (ban list);
- personal or ideological perspective.

III.5. EFFECTS OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY MEDIA SPACE

Media effects can be felt in different areas of society. According to Denis McQuail¹⁰⁵ media can act on individuals, groups, institutions and society as a whole. Also, the media can affect human personality in:

- cognitive dimension (changing the image of the world);
- affective dimension (creation or modification of attitudes and feelings);
- behavioural dimension (changes in the mode of action of individuals and phenomena of social mobilization).

From another perspective, media influence can occur in a short period of time, or it may need, until it becomes operational, a wider period of time.

Media effects can also create desired or undesired changes, because they can be the result of a controlled process such as media campaigns or in some instances, of other processes more or less unexpected.

The different levels on which media effects are exerted cannot and should not be analyzed separately, because the real effects, the profound ones, are of a cumulative type, as R. Rieffel stated, “from the moment when the information is repeated, they become part of some consistency and most media messages are convergent; minimal cumulative effects can trigger major changes.”¹⁰⁶

In literature, it is considered that the influence of the media may lead the individual receptors to reach agreement, identification, or internalization of values or of meanings transmitted through the press.¹⁰⁷

The agreement defines the conscious acceptance of the influence of a message, starting from the finding that between the opinions the viewer has and the values

¹⁰⁵ Denis McQuail, *The Influences and Effects of Mass-Media*, James, London, 1977, p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ Remy Rieffel, *L'élite des journalistes*, PUF, Paris, 1984, p. 81.

¹⁰⁷ Mihai Coman, *Introduction to media system*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1999.

promoted by the given message, there is some convergence, the individual rationally joins the content of the message.

Obviously that the adhesion is critical because it will not last and it can be subject to revaluations. This is circumstantial and does not reach the deep structures of the involved individuals. Thus, the agreement with the position of a particular political leader may disappear once the audience detects new elements, either in his actions or his language, or in the evaluations of those who comment politics. Research has shown that excessive media coverage of a certain personality can create the opposite effect of what is desired, the “boomerang” effect, leading to bore and indifference of the public towards the person, object or idea that intrudes too often in their daily lives. Identification involves taking values promoted by or through media channel and, consequently, the imitation of the behaviour it promotes. The individuals’ desire to identify with the characters promoted by the media makes them imitate their fashion style and use expressions and ways of speaking borrowed from them. Facilitating identification, creators of messages distributed by the media tend to get “loyal audience” either of economic or political reasons.

Internalization involves the assimilation of values, meanings and behaviour patterns of individuals. Through this phenomenon the maximum effectiveness is achieved in the influencing process. Generally, internalization is the terminus point of a process of influence or of a campaign of persuasion.

From the political point of view, the media exerts an action of integration of individuals into the system of beliefs, attitudes and knowledge generally accepted. Media manifests at the level of transmission of dominant ideologies. Through stereotypes, representations or images a conformity of ideas is included, without insisting on the rational over-explaining function of political mechanisms.

“External” values such as equality, freedom or pluralist democracy are transmitted by repetitions and positive contextualization.

Their reiteration in most information broadcasted by media and their sentencing of opposite options become citizens' factors of orientation in decision-making processes.

Media messages can stimulate obedience towards political power and its institutions, or can promote support of the parties that are in favour of liberal values, pro-capitalist ones.

Through **affiliation**, media identifies ideas with people and events, generating more solidarity in relation to the effects and emotional interests than in relation to principles and social values.

By diffusion, saturation and exaggeration, the media can impose those facts and ideas that correspond to the official view and produce political consensus in the relation between the government and the governed.

Receiving other messages may be inhibited as a result of positioning them in a negative context, either by their association with insignificant events or figures or by the overestimation of the contrary and controversial assessment of those involved.

Information is filtered and supported by specific arguments only according to the interests and ideas of those who broadcast. Receptors are used to automatically search for and select only those items that are transformed into events with a high degree of spectacle. Disclosures, the constant bombardment of facts and data as well as the exaggerated interest in issues related to political power, can transform a broadcast in a method of influence of the democratic processes, in the sense of citizens' electoral conditioning. By the almost exclusively limitation to the gathering of information from the media, the public becomes captive of a reality reduced to its schematic elements, representations replacing actual events. Thus, the policy shifts towards pseudo-events, towards that kind of personalities and actions that are suitable for this media drama, but who do not meet the basic condition of democracy - participation.

For the voter, the relevance of politics, of public debates and of civic activism is declining, in exchange, it is increasing the interest in intimate life, in spectacular and

dramatic issues. Thus, politicians are becoming less representative figures in the decision-making sense, but rather characters on an extremely simplistic scene.

Democracy implies rule by the power of the people, but this can not be achieved if “the people” does not constitute itself in a public able to express their opinions coherently, able to organize, to influence decision-making, if it is not a participatory audience. But for the public to make informed decisions, he must be informed, sensitized, mobilized and empowered.

Democracy gives to the media free access to tools and sources of information, to critical attitude and unrestricted competition. This is because without a free flow of ideas and without the freedom to receive and transmit information, media and democracy would not exist.

Media exert an important influence on politics because it presents in systematic and quick manner basic information to a wide audience. This audience includes the political elite and the people involved in decision-making processes, as well as a number of ordinary citizens whose political activity is shaped by information presented by the media.

Although many researchers - who have conducted studies on the effects of media - remained skeptical about the claims on the major impact of the media over politics, governments have developed political philosophies on the political role that the media should play in the societies they belong to, on the best ways to control their impact on government activities, and these were embodied and implemented by various regulations, constitutional and legal rules.

Contemporary political field was tailored to such an extent that it reached depolarization. A political party, a political institution or a state government can be reduced to a single person, which can embody even the image of an entire nation. Conflicts between parties, debates between various political figures, or any other political event does not designate anymore clashes of ideas, doctrines or ideologies, but simply personal wars. Political debates become truly racing (“horse racing” - is the term that American journalists use to describe the U.S. presidential election

campaign). Statements that political actors make in the public space and that incorporate opinions, comments, views, standpoints, attitudes replace the political debate (Jurgen Habermas considered as an ideal case of true public space political debates those from the Enlightenment era).

Politicians convince the public not through logical argumentation and justice of their exposed ideas, but rather by their ability to persuade, to appear credible by self-control, by the presence of spirit and spontaneity, that is, by their innate or acquired character and temperament traits, not by the policy they make (it is needed the differentiation between credibility and credulity, credibility is based on external characteristics of the speaker, while credulity refers to the intrinsic characteristics of speech. The credibility theme is old in the political field, the most important references being found in the ancient rhetoricians and orators - ethos).

Tailoring of politics finds its first level of explanation in the way journalists work. They choose from the many daily events only those that match the scale of interpretation of reality, formed on the basis of professional culture, journalists' worth and publishers' values. The concept of "newsworthiness" designates the characteristics of an event from the real world to actually become a press event. One of the characteristics of the news value is given by the human interest. It is easier to provide a human confrontation, than to reflect in the press negotiations of ideas. This principle applied to politics leads to the following drawbacks: political issues are taken out of context, political relations are highlighted according to power relations and the actual dimensions of the issue are either minimized or exaggerated.

The political spectacle-isation is reflected in two types of media approaches: theatrical-(ization) and affective-(ization) of messages. The theatrical is specific to festive moments of political life, such as conventions, congresses, meetings, parades and election parades, official visits, summits, ceremonies and various celebrations and last but not least broadcasted debates. The inclination of the media towards the sensational and entertainment helps political marketing strategies that translate into directing the political personalities' public appearances. The television is the new

public space where political events and issues of interest to a wide audience are discussed. The expansion of media led to the translation of the space of political debate from the halls of parliaments to radio and TV studios. Speeches in Parliament are becoming less important in front of the abundance of talk-shows. The image popularity that a politician can gain from a broadcasted appearance is most often a propulsion chance in the political life, a chance of gaining respectability or to achieve a tremendous success on political opponents.

The affective messages represent a means through which politicians try to avoid some serious or controversial issues by presenting them in a funny manner, by thickening its entertaining side. Lately, it was made the shift from debate genre to talk-shows genre, investigative inquiries being replaced with reports of atmosphere and interpretation interviews with personality interviews. In terms of content, this is simplified by journalists and is sacrificed in favour of the entertainment function. Thus, the “free market of ideas” (Thomas Jefferson) turns into a market of entertainment consumption. A debate turns into a show in which the citizen participates as a passive spectator instead of an active participation, presumed by polemical ideas.

III.6. MEANS OF ADAPTATION OF POLITICAL LANGUAGE TO THE MASS COMMUNICATION REQUESTS

As noted above, a form of political communication is that of communication with the public through the media. Since media communication is addressed to a heterogeneous audience, according to several criteria (age, gender, religion, ethnicity, culture, educational level, socio-professional category, etc.), the political discourse must adapt as well, in order to gain and maintain attention of a wide audience. Through the press, the political class is increasing its audience in an easier way. Without the mediation of media channels, political figures would hardly gain popularity and would make their political messages known with more difficulty.

In the absence of journalists, politicians should strive for field trips and meetings with voters, these implying more time, higher costs and increased patience. In short, the media provide visibility to the political class and contribute to the growing popularity of political actors.

To adapt to the characteristics of media, political discourse was obliged to abandon the preciousness and to create a publicly accessible language, simple, concise, factual, with appropriate information. This type of speech is different from the traditional one which was specifically of Greek and Latin orators, and which was kept in parliaments for centuries. The pulpit speeches were constructed on the basis of principles and textual strategies of the rhetoric. Spoken by the political elite, they used their scholarship to make historical references and also used other fields. This was permitted and appropriate because the addressee was elitist himself.

In contemporary society, the public became a far larger one and a more heterogeneous one, the contemporary politician being forced to create a different kind of speech that is suitable to utterance both in Parliament and in the media. To meet the double requirement, speech is divided into several blocks of text concentrated and abstract, separated by short sentences, concise, easy to memorize and retrieved by the news as a brief illustration in a journalistic material.

The political jargon perishes from the speech, the language getting closer to the common language. The abstract terms, the technical ones, the specialized ones, are excluded in favor of the common ones. This is mainly due to televised appearances, where politicians appeal to verbal communication techniques; in this way the political language is no longer ideological, becoming one of the simple everyday conversations.

Having as main objectives the persuasion and seduction of a numerous and heterogeneous audience, the political discourse does not rely on abstract argumentative style, on demonstration, on rationality and logic, but relies on affectivity, on arousing emotions and the imagination of its audience.

In this way are created plastic images, which rely on representations and symbols while calling for the suggestive power of the word to create visual images.

The speech contains representations and symbols easy to understand and / or imagine. Persuasion is joined by the speech and by paralinguistic and non-verbal elements, usually, this being the general impression that the politician offers to the public (especially for television).

Adapting political language to media communication requirements is limited to three methods described above, namely, the sentence structure is simple; specific elements of political language disappear in favor of a popular, common language of everyday conversations; abstract concepts and syllogisms give way to concrete and affective elements. This adaptation to the characteristics of communication channels leads to the emergence of new features of political communication, represented in particular by the personalization of political power and spectacularisation of the political phenomena.

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